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OLAND PAST AND PRESENT

J. H. HARLEY

POLAND PAST AND PRESENT

POLAND'S CASE FOR INDEPENDENCE

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A notable book of the autumn will be "Poland's Case for Independence," a reprint of certain remarkable pamphlets illustrating the vitality of Polish nationality, and written mostly by representative Poles. Introductions have been furnished to the pamphlets by Lord Bryce, Lord Weardale, Mr. G. P. Gooch, Mr. Sidney Webb, Dr. Seton Watson, etc.

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POLAND PAST AND
PRESENT

A HISTORICAL STUDY

BY

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WITH A PREFACE BY

LADISLAS MICKIEWICZ



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PREFACE

IN the year 1848, when Jules Bastide became Foreign Minister in France, some Polish exiles who had been intimately associated with him in the days before the Revolution hastened to inquire of him what he reckoned to do for their own native land. "Poland," answered the Minister with airy elegance, "is now no longer interesting." The truth was that he only used it as a convenient weapon when it was a question of overthrowing the French monarchy, but once the monarchy was completely overthrown, he had no further need for it.

At the present time Poland is again in the forefront of discussion. So far especially as the Governments of Europe have been concerned, they have been sparing, on her behalf, both of congratulations and promises. They look on her as a kind of trump card which they use in their diplomatic games so long as the war continues. But when the war comes to an end, will they employ to her the same language which Bastide used to the Polish exiles in 1848, or, instead of that, will they restore to her again her place among the nations?

In 1848 the popular suffrages were everywhere somewhat favourable to the cause of Poland, but the rulers of Europe realized that the iniquity of 1772 could not be redressed without a European conflagration, and they were resolved to run no risk of such an event. Now that this conflagration has actually occurred, the Chancellories are no longer possessed by the fear that the Polish Question will let loose the dogs of war, and they touch on it with more lightness of spirit than at any other epoch of their history. The Prime Ministers of Great Britain, of France, and of Italy have proclaimed that the time has come to solve the problem of nationalities, and to protect the smaller nations against the covetous ambitions of their more powerful neighbours. Even the partitioning Powers themselves have congratulated Poland for having retained the sense of her own individuality. On the eve of this very partition Jean Jacques Rousseau addressed the nation as follows: "Poles, if you cannot prevent your neighbours from swallowing you, you can at least secure that they will not succeed in digesting you." This to those who will yet congratulate Poland for having so skilfully followed the advice of the philosopher of Geneva!

Poland has, indeed, been summoned to a new prospect of life, and this call has vibrated from one end to another of a land stricken by the calamities of war. Up till now she has been

gagged and accustomed to see the rulers of Europe shut their ears to her complaints, but she has almost ceased to make any demur to the general indifference and ignorance. The fact is that there never has been any organ of opinion authorized to speak in her name. Now there are those who have either voluntarily taken up this work, or have received from certain groups of opinion in Poland the mission to fill up the gap. Those events in Polish history which have taken place during the long years since the insurrection of 1863, are still imperfectly known in Europe generally, because they have only been very briefly told by historians, and often almost entirely misapprehended. Public opinion had, in the first place, to be enlightened as to the real significance of these events. Contributing to that end there have been a profusion of newspaper and review articles, of pamphlets and communications to the ministers of various States. Then it was determined to publish an Encyclopædia, but this work was necessarily hindered by the dispersion of Polish men of learning, and by the difficulties in the way of Polish parties either communicating with each other or with the rest of the world. These difficulties themselves, however, were an incitement to publicists in foreign lands to multiply their discussions, and, although there have been inevitable divergences of opinion, this movement still continues.

The politicians who haunt the antechambers of the Chancelleries cannot, in their propaganda, be accused of the same lack of unity. Interest is the sole motive to which these apostles appeal in their self-imposed task of converting the European Cabinets. Self-interest is the constant theme of their arguments. They can think of no other consideration which might conceivably sway a Government. In their confidential memoranda they talk like speculators who are commending to a big banker what they say is the most lucrative deal they have ever put before him. These Talleyrands in embryo imagine that to talk of justice is only to play a losing game. But instead of promising big dividends they offer such and such another part of Poland to such and such another State, convinced that no statesman could harden his heart against an inducement so alluring. Poland, according to such as these, was unskilfully partitioned in 1772, and they are going to make a fresh division. All that surprises them is that the statesmen to whom they propose a gift of this or that slice of territory do not at once fall on their necks. These peripatetic Tadpoles of politics pass their existence in making a bow to one or another, in passing from the reception room of the President of the French Republic to the presence chamber of the King of Britain, and then again to the reception room of His Holiness the Pope. Lately even one of

these amateur diplomatists, at a public lecture in Paris, adverted to the provincial demands of Polish separatists, and roundly asseverated that Poland herself must give independence to all the several groups of dissidents.

That is just as if—which may God forbid—France was partitioned, and there arose some *Félibres*, who recalled the cruelties of the Albigensian War and the vanished glories of Provence. In the same way might Bretons cast blame on Anne of Brittany for having married the King of France, or Basques ask that their language should enjoy at least the same privileges as the French tongue! It is evidently the fault of diplomacy if international morality appears a myth, and if oppressed peoples dare not indulge in either hope or speech.

Russia has a sure and certain way of gathering all the Poles to her standard. She has only to proclaim a Poland re-established within the boundaries of 1772. The misleading pretexts which she has put forward to sustain her claim on certain Polish provinces are as far away from the real issue as the flight of French aviators over Nuremberg, with which Prussia coloured her declaration of war on France in 1914. The re-establishment of Poland in her liberties and within the boundaries of 1772 is without prejudice to the future relations of Poland and Russia. These relations should not be left for settlement to private in-

dividuals who have never been entrusted with a mandate. In the past the contest between Poland and Russia has been a contest not of races but of ideas. If the ruling spirit in Russia becomes different then the two nations can mutually shake hands—provided, of course, that Poland has had her hands previously freed. So long as she is held in chains, it is impossible to say beforehand what she will do when she is released from her chains. It is equally reckless to declare impossible a change of the ruling spirit in Russia. The ways of Providence are past finding out, and it was barbarians who became the chief apostles of the Christian life. Only one thing is certain, and that is, that Poland has no intention of awaking, minus an arm or two legs, to go down into the living tomb of a hospital for incurables. If she leaves anything in the tomb at all, it will only be the errors that permitted her enemies once to bury her there.

Prussian politicians aim at applying to international relations the philosophical maxim of Plautus: "Man preys on man." Prince von Bülow, in a recently published book, "Deutsche Politik," propounds generally the thesis that a State need only be moral so far as morality is not inconsistent with its political interest, and he concludes that the gradual destruction of Poland is the indispensable condition of the expansion of Prussia. According to this point of view, an

empire is a voracious organism which turns a deaf ear to the demands of those smaller political bodies which it feels it necessary to swallow ; and those smaller bodies, on the other hand, can only lay this unction to their soul, that in being swallowed by the greater they will pass from a situation of inferiority to the enviable heights on which sits enthroned the empire which has swallowed them. What satisfaction can it be for the victim of the tiger to reflect that soon he will become part of the power and agility of his terrible murderer !

Let there be no mistake as to this attitude of Prussia ! What she does is to parade before the eyes of the Poles that " All hope abandon " which the condemned souls read on the gates of Dante's " Inferno." Here, again, is what Prince von Bülow says : " A nation must either conquer or be conquered, it must become an anvil or a hammer ; there is no third possibility. The feeling of the superiority of its own characteristic culture inevitably leads to victorious expansion. German colonial expansion has been in the past the culminating end of the policy of Frederick the Great ; and he it was who considered the germanization of Poland as the future mission of the culture of Prussia. No regard for Polish nationality should be allowed to paralyse our efforts for the conservation and development of the German mind in the territories formerly

forming part of Poland. An independent Poland is incompatible with the vital interests of Germany. In no circumstances can Germans forget that the Prussian monarchy has grown strong through the discomfiture of the Republic of Poland, and that the black eagle has soared nearer the skies in exact ratio of the distance by which it has overtopped the white eagle of the Poles. Are we obliged to suffer the Grand Duchy of Posen, Western Prussia, High Silesia, and a part of Eastern Prussia again to be lost to the German spirit and to contribute by our inaction to such a result? Surely our national duty is not only to retain but to increase, if that be possible, our possessions in the west of Prussia. Political exigencies impose on us sometimes hard necessities which bring much pain to our heart but which no sentimental feelings should influence us to dispute. The fight for territory, which in reality is a struggle for the preponderance of the German interest in Eastern markets, has always been the "alpha and the omega" of our Eastern political efforts. This policy of colonial expansion serves as a rallying cry to carry forward the germanization of our Eastern provinces; whilst our educational policy brings the intellectual life of Poland nearer to that of Germany. We can only hope to attain the real good of this national policy in following the path traced out for us by Frederick the Great and Bismarck."

To speak plainly, does not all this ornamental language simply amount to the reiteration of the cry of "Delenda Carthago" before every promising manifestation of Polish feeling? From this point of view, our national interest is the same as that of Great Britain. In addition, the russification dreamt of by some Russian statesmen of the past has equally failed in Poland. Adam Mickiewicz once said that in the midst of the exiled populations of Siberia and of Kamtchatka the Russian officials and soldiers made as deep an impression on him as do the great ocean battleships on the fishes whom they cross on one of their cruises. These men pay their taxes and that is all. It will one day be demonstrated that in Poland the conquered has exercised a mighty influence on the conqueror and has scarcely at all submitted to a counter influence in return. Feeling may be high between Poland and Russia, but this difference is not going to be eternal! Is there really a single Russian who seriously maintains that russification and the rule of force is the sole resource after the long duel between the two nations? Nobody, not even a Gourko or a Pourichkievitch, could venture to defend such an insane sentiment. It is true that one may still ask, with the poet, what is going to come from this Russian chrysalis—is it to be "a brilliant butterfly that will emerge when the sun of liberty shall dawn or will there only appear a falling

moth, that sombre denizen of the night?" It is all a fateful mystery, and yet, however fateful it may be, it is more desirable than a certain evil. There is, therefore, for the Poles to-day neither neutrality to be observed between the two combatants nor any expectation of a settlement until victory has declared itself. And if, on the day after that victory, Poland is balked of her hopes, there will remain open to her that very answer which André Zamojski gave to Prince Gortchakoff when he retailed to him the concessions of Alexander II: "We take them; but we give you no receipt." But why should these ancient invoices be rendered again indefinitely? Why should not one of those unexpected events that disturb the calculations of the most despotic Governments not intervene even at the eleventh hour? Let every Pole, at any rate, hope that Providence has some surprises in store for him, and that the resulting happiness will more than repay him for the sorrows which his nation is now suffering.

Europe had averted her gaze from a Poland which had become for her only an unfortunate memory. Our history was stranger to the European peoples than that of Siam. The horrors of present war have obliged Europe to elevate herself above these petty considerations, which substitute an optimism as shifting as the wind for the immutable thoughts which, in the hour of danger,

are the sole anchor of a nation's safety. But, at the same time, each of the allied States looks at the Polish Question from its own point of view.

France is a timid friend. She asks questions of the Russian Sphinx, and she desires a reply before she commits herself. Italy has consummated her own unity all too recently to give any serious support to an anti-Polish campaign which reminds her of these unlucky protests hypocritically drawn up by the so-called defenders of the spurious nationalities of Tuscany and the two Sicilies. As for Great Britain, she has perhaps of them all the most accurate realization of the gravity of the present crisis. Only let this crisis be met in a spirit of justice, and a new Europe will arise, with her ancient faults expiated by the most generous blood of her children, and her wounds all bound up and healed. No longer will she live in the exhausting anticipation of an impending catastrophe. The ruin of one State will not appear the inevitable condition of the prosperity of another. The morality which regulates the relations of individuals will at length regulate the relations between nation and nation. This at any rate is the indispensable condition of universal peace. Ruskin tells us that man travels more quickly than in the days of the past, but that he arrives no more easily at the goal of his desires. Universal peace will come, neither as

a result of the progress of science, nor yet because of the greater efficacy of our engines of destruction. Sophisms like these will lose their plausibility in this great cataclysm for which we must all take a share of responsibility. Peace really depends on a previous moral progress in the minds of individuals, and this brings the humanities of family life into national relations, and secures that, just as city no longer battles against city, so nation shall no longer war against nation.

The history of Poland is full of instruction to those of us who live to-day. In more than one respect Poland reminds us, in the moral world, of the first pioneers in the world of industry,—those men who had a fruitful idea, but who lacked the capital necessary to realize it. The result was that the only people who gained by their invention were those who afterwards bought it up at a low price. Poland had not the moral capital necessary to resist the great Russo-Austro-Prussian Trust. This Trust never thought of anything else than the interests of its shareholders. All that was chivalrous and merciful in the national aspirations of Poland the Trust ignored in their estimate of her destinies, and it is time this selfish and sordid exploitation came at last to an end.

If Russia made reparation to Poland, she would find in this a satisfaction which a return to her ancient errors would take away for ever. Prussia,

on the other hand, cannot reconcile herself with Poland. She arose from perfidy to Poland, she has grown from the robbery of Polish lands, and only the break-up of her constitution will render Germany immune from that infection which threatens to disseminate peril throughout Europe.

Great Britain will have a preponderating voice in the areopagus which will decide the fate of nations, when the last cannon will have fired its shot, in that contest which deserves, far more than the fight at Leipzig, the appellation of "The Battle of the Nations." Will the case of Poland then be considered before competent judges? Will the propaganda conducted by the Poles themselves, intense in its activities, be sufficient to make the foreign countries realize our cause with full consciousness of all that it involves?

Natives of all these lands have taken up the pen, and come to the aid of the Polish people, while serving the interest of their own country, by influencing her to return an equitable verdict.

Mr. J. H. Harley sets forth in broad touches the memorable events of Polish history. He is sparing of prophecies as to the future, but he describes with very great precision and clearness the conditions of the divers administrations imposed on Poland since its partition. At the end he concludes that Poland has a right to independent existence and that she will prove to be a buffer state able to withstand the shocks of

the empires which she separates the one from the other.

Poland, however, will not be a little Slavic Belgium. She is something more formidable than a buffer state. She will have a much more salutary influence on her neighbours, because she has suffered longer than they, and sorrow exercises a profound educative influence. Meantime it is a pious tribute to these memories to describe her past, with its exploits, its misfortunes, its scientific and literary achievements, the persecutions to which it had to submit, and the promises by which it was lured to destruction.

If there is one department of this history which escapes the investigation of a foreigner, it is that which tells of the anticipations which heave in the breast of a people, and sustain their spirit in the midst of terrible trials. On such developments of our national patriotism the author does not dilate. He contents himself with faithfully noting the triumphs of Poland, the several stages of her *via dolorosa*, and then the appearance of her final deliverance. Is not this the conviction that Britain needs most to have impressed on her? Once Poland receives her independence all the rest will come in gradually increasing progression. She will hardly stand on her feet again before she will make a brilliant revelation of her possibilities in the face of the world. Until those days come she will only excite

our pity. Be grateful, then, if a pious hand lifts up here and there a corner of our winding sheet and reveals a Poland pallid and bloodstained ! Even at the present hour the blood is beginning to circulate more rapidly in her veins. To-morrow she will open her eyes !

LADISLAS MICKIEWICZ.

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POLAND PAST AND PRESENT

PROLOGUE

BRITAIN AND POLAND

POLAND was once a subject of the liveliest interest to British politicians and to British lovers of freedom. Debates were challenged in Parliament on the absorbing subject of her rights and wrongs. British poets sang the dirge of her lost hopes. Everywhere there seemed a dim realization of the fact that, somehow or other, the destinies of the two countries met and mingled—that the interests of the one lay in upholding the freedom of the other.

That was in the earlier and the middle part of the nineteenth century, before international politics in this country had received the far-off name of "foreign politics," and when Great Britain strove to make her voice heard in the Chancellories of Europe as the friend and supporter of constitutional liberty and progress. In the eighteenth century, when France was the foe whom Britain chiefly had to fear, there was no very strong in-

ducement to interfere in what appeared the domestic affairs of the Near East. The natural allies of Britain in the great European struggle to repress France and to maintain the balance of power were Austria, Prussia, and Russia, just the very three despotic States which carried out the partition of Poland.

The First Partition was initiated by Frederick II of Prussia, and carried out by the Empress Catherine of Russia with the help of the Emperor of Austria. Louis XV of France and his Government were opposed to it. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Suffolk, regarded it complacently. How could he be expected to do otherwise? Prussia, Britain's ally from the Seven Years War, received the lion's share of the spoils. The Empress Catherine, with whom Great Britain desired a political and commercial treaty, received the lioness's share of that which was remaining. Austria received only a jackal's portion; but then, Austria was the ally of France at this particular time, and is it not a law of nature to give the most to your friends and the least to your enemies?

Fortunately, however, this good old rule, this simple plan, did not for any long time remain operative as the practical guide to British foreign policy. Between the First Partition of Poland in 1772 and the Second Partition in 1792, that unceasing and unwearied march of events which

so often confounds the vaticinations of complacent theorists had produced a marked change in the attitude of Great Britain with respect to the Near East.

The main causes that produced this result can be briefly yet sufficiently indicated. There was, in the first place, the fact that Britain was now established in India and was obliged to regard Russia as an Asiatic Power destined to compete with her in the territory of the Far East. In the second place, France had sought closer relations with Russia, and had concluded a commercial treaty with her in 1786. In the third place, Austria had concluded an actual alliance with the Colossus of the East, and had cemented this diplomatic friendship by declaring war against Turkey in order to seize Constantinople.

All these causes, the last no less than the first or second, inclined William Pitt, the great Prime Minister of those memorable days, to suspect Russia and to espouse the cause of Poland. He summoned Oginski, the Polish Ambassador, from The Hague to London in 1789, and discussed with him the question of a closer understanding between the two countries. He raised even the further question of closer economic relations. To such an extent had the two deliberating parties been brought together, that when, in the spring of 1791, war between Great Britain and Russia was imminent, it was very well known that Poland

was prepared to act on the side of our own country. Many leading British statesmen continued to take a practical interest in their expected ally. When the new Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791, which aimed at a complete reorganization of the country's Government, was denounced by the Empress of Russia, it was commended by Edmund Burke.

Unfortunately, however, Pitt was unable to ensure a unanimity of political opinion on this question of a war with Russia. The Empress Catherine had her agents in Great Britain, and Voronzeff, the Ambassador who represented her at the Court of St. James's, was unceasing in his efforts to detach prominent politicians from the cause of Poland. Many leading newspapers were on the Russian side. Fox and the Whig opposition were, at least, inclined to be favourable. Lord Granville, the able yet enigmatic statesman who was Foreign Secretary at the time, had, at any rate, no strong views on the subject. It was even understood that Court influences were being exerted against a war with Russia. The idea underlying this activity was that the French Revolution remained the real enemy to be watched, and that, in any case, Great Britain could not afford to divide her strength.

In the end, therefore, Pitt had to give up all idea of an economic or political alliance with Poland. France was held to be the outstanding

foe to be fought and vanquished. All throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the one fixed and guiding principle of British policy has been that whenever any State becomes disproportionately strong or menacing in Europe, it is bound in no long time to measure its strength with this island home. France was in training for the world-wide aspirations of the Napoleonic wars, and Britain saw her duty plain to seek out allies in order to maintain the equilibrium of Europe. Austria and Prussia were ready to her hand. If Russia was not actively to join her, she must at least be induced to remain a sympathetic spectator. As for Poland, the exigencies of high politics had left no time remaining to inquire into her wrongs. So Poland was abandoned to her fate in the iniquitous Second Partition.

When the abandoned nation rose in 1794, under the leadership of Kosciuszko, the situation was, on the whole, similar. France was creating a new heaven and a new earth, and Poland was on the side of the angels. The Eastern country had received the support of the Western Committee du Salut Publique, and she was rendering invaluable help to the Revolution by drawing off the attention of the despots from the world convulsion. But by this time Great Britain was becoming more and more stiffened in her unwavering hostility to France. Napoleon was beginning to

fly his true colours. The Directory made possible his assumption of a despotism more comprehensive than that of Russia. The Government of Great Britain, alarmed at the situation, passed a Treason Act, and then a Sedition Act, because they thought that no measures were too strong to avert the calamity of a Europe laid prostrate under the yoke of the conqueror.

In this way Great Britain, which was fitted by its love of freedom and self-government to be the friend and deliverer of Poland, was again induced to leave her to her fate in the Third Partition of 1795. It was not that, under the Government of Pitt, there was no recognition of the fact that a fellow-feeling, deeper than any external differences of race and situation, united the citizens of the two countries. Pitt had already demonstrated the contrary in the advances which he had made to Poland through the Ambassador Oginski. But again diplomatic considerations exerted their force. It was looked on as the prime objective of British policy to subvert and overthrow the designs of France. Poland was friendly to France; therefore Poland must be abandoned and finally handed over to her fate.

It will be shown in the subsequent pages of this book how Poland also got identified with the fortunes of Napoleon. This was no mere reactionary move on the part of a freedom-loving people. There was one side of Napoleon from

which he could be regarded as the soldier of the Revolution. He overturned venerable traditions. He made and unmade empires. He compelled the ancient despots to tremble on their thrones. That was the side of him which attracted the attention of Poland, and kept her people true to him by an excess of chivalry which showed the innate fineness of their nature, but which accumulated fresh obstacles between them and the rulers of Great Britain. Thus it was that, through the Napoleonic wars, no succour came to Poland from the home of democracy in the West.

Yet it must never be supposed that the British people, at the red ripe of their heart, had really swerved from their traditional sympathy with the cause of Poland. That was not and could not be so. The day after Lord Castlereagh arrived at Vienna in 1814, to take part in the deliberations of the Congress, he felt constrained to tell the Tsar of Russia that "the British Government would view with great satisfaction the restoration of Poland to its independence as a nation." And the reason was no burning sympathy for freedom in the inner consciousness of Lord Castlereagh, but simply a recognition of the fact that the feelings of the British people forced him to such an attitude.

Again and again this public sympathy was manifested in Britain during the earlier and middle

decades of the nineteenth century. In 1832 there was more than one debate in Parliament specially directed to this unfortunate subject. In 1846 there was a society established for the regeneration of Poland, of which Mr. Ernest Jones, the well-known Chartist, was president, and Mr. Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, the Radical M.P. for Finsbury, was a leading member. This society in two successive years presented petitions to the House of Commons in which it demanded the intervention of the British Government for the restoration of the nationality of Poland.

This continued British interest was also conspicuously manifested in the fateful year of 1863. On July 20th Mr. Horsman drew the attention of Parliament to the oppressive measures of Russia, and asked the House to agree to a resolution: "That in the opinion of this House the arrangements made with regard to Poland by the Treaty of Vienna have failed to secure the good government of Poland or the peace of Europe, and any further attempt to replace Poland under the conditions of that treaty must cause calamities to Poland, and embarrassment and danger to Europe." It is true that Lord Palmerston, who was Prime Minister at the time, declined to accept this plain-spoken resolution, but he did so only on the ground that he could not commit his Government to a more active policy until an answer had been obtained from Russia to six

points which France, Austria, and Lord John Russell on behalf of Great Britain had put before the Russian Colossus in the previous month.

What were these six points which Lord Palmerston thus recalled? Is it not sufficient to mention that they included national representation, a Polish administration, liberty of conscience, and the use of Polish as the official language of the kingdom? It would have been impossible for the British Minister to put forward demands so radical as these had he not been certain that he had behind him the fairly solid support of the freedom-loving folk of the British Islands!

Nor is it at all difficult to discover why the sympathies of the British people should have been thus consistently given to the cause of Poland. At the beginning of the century they had, to some extent, been alienated because Poland had become associated with the cause of France, and France was the Power which in those days of stress and storm Great Britain reckoned the most serious danger to the peace of Europe. But in 1863—though there was still a certain amount of suspicion as to the ultimate designs of the Emperor Napoleon III—events were rapidly drifting to that culminating year of 1870, which revealed a Prussianized Germany as the outstanding menace of the future. Already Prussia had willingly assumed the rôle of the most uncompromising

foe of Poland. In the Polish insurrection of 1830 she had mobilized four army corps to intervene on behalf of Russia if the necessity arose. In the insurrection of 1863 she cynically refused to take any part in the remonstrances which Great Britain, France, Austria, Spain, and Italy handed to the Tsar, and even sent Count Alversleben to St. Petersburg to conclude a military convention under which the troops of either country might help each other to put down rebellion. Poland was, and always has been, the exact antithesis of Prussianism in politics, and the British people instinctively felt that by giving Poland a renewed and independent existence they would immensely strengthen the forces that made for liberty in Europe.

A very potent authority, no less than Prince Bismarck himself, agreed with them in this contention. No one can read his dispatches of that time as they are now fortunately accessible to the historian, without realizing that he felt that the presence of an independent and reinvigorated Poland would be dangerous to the cause of monarchical and autocratic government. His plain-spoken master, the first German Kaiser, was equally emphatic in his distrust of representative government, and it was, no doubt, with his hearty concurrence that Bismarck proposed to Russia a cession of the western part of Poland in order that Poland might be finally silenced by being

placed under the iron heel of the most powerful of the three partitioning States.

So far, from 1815 to 1863, the sympathies of British politicians were undoubtedly enlisted in the cause of Poland. This sympathy did not always find proportionate expression in action, for there were many cross-currents in European politics, and France and Great Britain, or France and Austria, or Russia and France were connected in such complicated ways that it was difficult to get them united in any whole-hearted pursuit of a great and common purpose.

After 1863, and until the very beginning of the great European War, there was undoubtedly a certain relaxation of the interest with which, in earlier days, the British people followed the fortunes of the cause of Poland. It was not that their country had wavered in her allegiance to the sacred cause of freedom. Here, as always, freedom has prospered from more to more. But, so far as the general course of European affairs was concerned, the official policy was non-intervention in the continental struggles, and the commercial men who influenced so largely the course of politics in these years did not fail to recognize this policy as the best for their own particular programme of Free Trade and business expansion.

Of course, it was not always possible to follow to its logical conclusions a policy of non-inter-

vention. The British people live on an island, and they can therefore disregard the embroilments of continental politicians to an extent that Poland never did and never could do. But even an island is not separated from the mainland by an expanse of sea which can never be crossed. Great Britain, the Power that holds India, had interests in Europe whether she willed or not. She could not dissociate herself from the Eastern Question. She assumed a protectorate in Egypt. She could not close the ears of her politicians against the cries which reached her persistently from here, there, and everywhere.

There can be no doubt, however, that at the beginning of the twentieth century Great Britain occupied a peculiarly isolated position. It would almost be correct to say that, in many ways, she stood practically alone in the world. The Great Powers of the Continent were divided into two groups, the Triple Alliance and the Dual Alliance. Germany, Austria, and Italy constituted the Triple Alliance. Russia and France, at that time a strangely mated pair, made up the Dual Alliance. It was evident that, in order to protect this country by preserving the equilibrium of Europe, these two groups must be kept so nearly equal in power and prestige that neither would attack the other, and thus the balance of power in Europe should be for ever preserved.

To some extent the equilibrium had been achieved in the latter years of the nineteenth century, and Europe was preserved in peace because neither of the two great groups of allied Powers was certain as the ultimate issue in case of an appeal to arms. But all the time, though neither of the groups cared to attack, there was no doubt of the difficult position of Great Britain, uneasily poised on her island home apart from the two great alliances of combatants. She could not be said to be more than on speaking terms with any of them. She confronted Russia in Turkey, Persia, Tibet, and Afghanistan. With France she had friction in Egypt, Siam, West Africa, and Newfoundland. Neither could she turn from the Dual Powers to seek sympathy from their three allied opponents. It was rather the interest of the Triple Alliance, or at any rate the interest of Germany, the leading member of the group, to embroil Great Britain in a contest with either France or Russia, or with both of these Great Powers. The effect of such a gigantic trial of strength would be to weaken the military efficiency of the Dual Alliance, and as for its result on Great Britain herself, Germany could neither know nor care.

The British nation at the beginning of the twentieth century was in a somewhat similar position to that of Poland before the First Partition. It had a traditional leaning to liberty

and democratic experiment. To that extent it was a standing reproach to autocratic despotism, and a constant encouragement to revolt to the subjects of the despots. It was confronted with a Europe armed to the teeth, and divided up into two groups of allied Powers who loved not each other, and who were only united by a common suspicion of the nation further advanced than they in the cause of freedom and progress. It is now beginning to be apparent, as diplomatic revelations accumulate, that the parallel may be pushed very much farther than this. The Kaiser's famous Kruger telegram, as is clear from subsequent admissions of the German Government, was an attempt to ascertain whether, on the pretence of defending the independence of the Transvaal Republic, an anti-British coalition might not combine in one common object the powers of the two great systems of alliances. Such a hostile action as this, taken along with the continental and anti-British Press campaign at the time of the South African war, showed that the partition of Poland in the nineteenth century might easily, in certain circumstances, have been followed in the twentieth century by a partition of the Empire of Great Britain.

The main reasons underlying this movement towards a partition were the same or similar in the cases of Great Britain and Poland. The

nation more advanced in the democratic sense is continually an object of distrust and even hatred to States less democratically inclined. And the less democratic State, because of its administrative despotism, is more efficiently organized for the reactionary game of war than the nation with more spacious traditions of liberty and government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In addition to this there was the probability in the case of Great Britain—a probability elevated into certainty by the course of previous history—that any dominating State or alliance of States would eventually come into collision with this country. It was so in the case of Spain under Philip II. It was so in the case of France under Louis Quatorze and Napoleon. Both the Triple Alliance and the Dual Alliance imagined themselves in this position of ultimate dominance, and each of them saw in Great Britain the eventual enemy.

Britain was saved from the catastrophe of such a partition by the great advantage which she possesses over such a nation as Poland. She is an island, and an expeditionary force has to be transported across the sea in ships. She is not like Poland, a nation settled on a plain, and thus accessible at all parts to an attack by the enviroing forces of her foes. Again, she was able in the twentieth century to overcome her isolation and to transform the Dual Alliance

into the Triple and then the Quadruple Entente. Poland made several efforts to deal with her foes by the method of alliances. One, the proposal of William Pitt, already mentioned in the earlier part of this Prologue, unfortunately failed for the reasons which have also been already mentioned. Another, the actual alliance with Prussia, did not result in the salvation of Poland because the latter country was too honest for Prussian diplomatic morality, and her efforts after a new Constitution had excited the wrath of an autocratic Prussian Court. In these respects fortune favoured Great Britain and the stars in their courses fought against the cause of Poland.

But though Poland was partitioned and Great Britain escaped a similar fate, it remains no less true that the destiny of Poland is inseparably bound up with the interests of our own island Empire. It has already been pointed out that the dominating preoccupation of British international policy, now, as at all times, is to prevent any Power or conjunction of Powers from becoming unduly preponderant in Europe, and thus eventually measuring their strength with the country of Chatham and Pitt and Canning and Gladstone. From 1815 to 1915 one of the most successful ways in which peace was preserved and a balance of power secured was by the creation of smaller and neutral States separating the larger combatants. There was Holland, for

example, after the Congress of Vienna, which a little later separated into Belgium and Holland. There was also Switzerland and Denmark. The neutrality of these States was made possible by collective guarantees from the Great Powers, and though the obligation of these collective guarantees was often loosely regarded, there can be no doubt that the presence of these smaller States on the Western side of the map of Europe prevented any further expansion of the greater States, and made practicable an intervening zone which armies would have to cross before any one State could get at the throat of another.

These small neutral States, as has been already remarked, are concentrated on the Western front of Europe. On the Eastern front there is a noticeable want of similar precautions. Poland was allowed to be blotted off the map of Europe, and thus a nation stronger than Belgium or Switzerland, and which might have been neutralized as a buffer State between Germany and Russia, or between Austria and Russia, ceased to be any but a disturbing influence in international politics.

It is the undoubted interest of Great Britain to get the balance of Europe as well secured for the future in the East as in the West of Europe. Poland could never be other than a strong and undoubted influence in the cause of progress and democracy. No one can hesitate

to adopt such a conclusion who studies her history as it will be summarily indicated in the course of the succeeding pages. An independent Poland on Europe's Eastern front would mean a weighty obstacle erected against the sudden outbreak of a great European war in a region always prone to be a centre of disturbance and storm. In other words, Poland would be an advanced Western nation keeping guard amid the troubled and often critical politics of the Near East.

This is why it is becoming more and more evident that the future of Poland will be one of the most absorbing of all the problems at the end of the present war. Her divided individuality must not and cannot remain. All the efforts of her most formidable foes have been unable to take from her the sense of a continued and imperishable life. Divided into three parts as a territory, she has continued to show the signs of a unity deeper than any appearance of territorial difference. Her greatest poets have sung in the days of her sorrow. Her efforts after education and democratic development have made her patriots proud of the noble tradition in which they have been reared. To show how this national life has ramified and developed is the main, and as it is hoped the reader will recognize, the worthy purpose of this little book.

It may be that the result of its perusal will be to implant in the mind of the British people

who have rallied so resolutely to their country, in their country's hour of need a sense of the ultimate interdependence of their cause with that of the future constitution of Poland. Only then will Europe be effectively preserved against the further risk of war. Only then will a new Europe be built on enduring foundations. Freedom's battle is again only just begun. The old system of alliances based on material aggrandizement, lightly entered on and lightly again disowned, has now become a thing of the remote past. Nations in the future will unite because they stand for something great or noble, because the common pursuit of a common purpose makes them think and act as one. Every soldier of Great Britain and France, in the European war to-day, sharpens his sword because he thinks he will wield it in the cause of liberty and freedom. For the sake of these names, abstractions though they may appear, he is willing, if need be, to offer the sacrifice of his life. For this cause, too, he wills and is persuaded that France and Great Britain should be united against the common foe.

No additional ally in such a sacred cause could be as staunch and true as a renovated and independent Poland. That is why her history, appeals to us all as we are standing, sorrowful and perplexed, amid the dust and smoke of a new and ominous Armageddon.

BOOK FIRST
THE PAST

αἰῶ Πρωμηθεῦ σὼν ὑπερστένω πόνων.
(Alas ! I groan, Prometheus, for thy pain.)
ÆSCHYLUS.

CHAPTER I

AT THE BIRTH OF HISTORY

THE Poles came comparatively late into the limelight of recorded history. No doubt they had previously passed through all the varied stages of prehistoric development with which anthropologists have made us familiar. They had bowed in awe before the weird incantations of the medicine-man and the necromancer. They had submitted to strange and almost incomprehensible customs of marriage. It may be also that, like the Slav peasants of Europe generally, their passage from No-man's-land to a stage of society where property became divided was accompanied by all kinds of savage disputation. But all this process, however varied it may have been, is discreetly veiled in the impenetrable darkness of aboriginal history. When we first come in contact with the rude Slav tribes of which they formed a part between the Dnieper and the Vistula, they had already passed beyond the rudeness of savagery to a more definitely agricultural phase of society.

History is a strange lottery. Why one nation is distinguished and another is obscure must often be explained by the merest accident, and by the merest accident alone. In the case of the Slav, the particular accident was the fact that those tribes that happened to be nearest to the Romans were lifted into historic immortality by a mention in the Roman chronicles. They alone signified aught for the safety of the Roman frontier. Consequently they alone excited the interest of the skilful organizers who directed the Roman polity.

The Poles belonged to the most Western section of the great body of the Slavonic tribes. On that account it is not until the tenth century that we can date their real entrance into the course of mediæval history.

But we are not now dependent, in our estimate of the course of historical development, on the chance report of an ancient chronicler. Many causes, topographical, economic, and religious, as well as personal and political, go to make a people what it is, and it is only by laboriously collecting all the evidence which comes to us from every sociological quarter of the compass that we can fill up to some extent the yawning gaps in our previous historical knowledge.

In the dim distance of the past we can discern some of the history of the Poles, whilst still indistinguishable from the great body of the

Slavic peoples. They inhabited, along with their fellow-tribesmen, the large forest lands between the Dnieper and the Elbe. They lived on hunting and wild honey. They watched suspiciously for the trail of their enemies. They maintained a precarious existence while faced by the terrors of the seen and the unseen.

Their lands lay open to the onset of their enemies. Not mountains, but marshes, were the geographical environment in which they had to work out their historic destiny. They were ever obliged to bear the first shock of the charge of Eastern and Western invaders. In the sixth century there was the barbarous devastation of the Avars. At the close of the ninth century there was the great Magyar invasion of the central Danubian plain. As a result of the second of these invasions, the Slavs of the south were definitely separated from the Slavs of the north.

But the most notable of these invaders were the Teutons. In the earliest of the Polish legends they played a sinister and even a treacherous part. It was by their unceasing pressure that the Slavs were gradually pushed back from the Elbe. Many of the tribes left the forest lands and undertook a movement towards the Hungarian plains. By the end of the fifth century some of them had crossed the Danube and entered the Balkans. At the close of the ninth century, as has been already pointed out, these adventurous

bands were separated from their fellow-tribesmen of the north. Evidently life was too often a great pilgrimage in those far past times.

During all these strenuous and troubled events the Poles were the dwellers in the plains, but they were indistinguishable from the great hordes of their fellow-tribesmen. How was it that they elevated themselves into a position of comparative pre-eminence? How was it that they began to stamp their name on the history of Europe in a record of imperishable national vitality?

The original home of the Polish race was on the borders of Lake Goplo, lying to the south of the now famous fortress of Thorn. At that time the configuration of the country was rather different from what it is now. Smaller lakes, which are now completely separated from Lake Goplo, then formed part of a great undivided whole. The present great marshes form the beds of what were previously small and yet notable rivers. A system of water communication, in fact, connected Lake Goplo with the Baltic, and united Stettin to the Slavonic hinterland.

This was exactly what was needed in order to give the Poles their first start, and to establish their permanent headship over all the surrounding tribes. As we laboriously strive to follow the progress of humanity to civilization from its aboriginal savagery we invariably find that chance circumstances of situation or soil, the fertility of

a river-bed, the possession of valuable minerals, or the possibility of water communication, are the primary factors which settle who shall be taken and who shall eventually be left. With a convenient system of waterways radiating from their home at Lake Goplo, the Poles were regularly visited by the Byzantine merchants, who brought them goods from the Far East. Towns sprang up to guard the integrity of the waterways. The Poles were beginning to claim their share in the wide world's sunshine.

But all these commercial advantages would have been useless had the Poles not been possessed of other qualities. They had tenacity, resoluteness, vitality, and a genius for organization and administration. At that early time, aided by their topographical advantages, no doubt, but not wholly and entirely on that account, the Poles of Lake Goplo began to assert their pre-eminence over all the surrounding tribes. The Vislans, or Poles round Cracow, and the Mazovians, or tribes round Warsaw, were amongst the first to submit to their hegemony, but nothing seemed to be able to prevent the irresistible extension of the Polish power.

What it all meant it is certain that we have not yet actually learned. Nothing is more significant than the discoveries of quite recent times as to the existence of an earlier and even a democratically inclined Mediterranean race, which in later

days was dominated by a numerically smaller horde of Aryan conquerors. The divisions of other days in Poland between nobles and peasants would incline the historian to believe that some rectification of our former ideas in this direction is also necessary in Eastern Europe. The Poles, as we find them in earlier historic days, were certainly not possessed of any of the qualities of a merely slave morality, and if we derive the racial term "Slav" from the possession of such attributes we must suppose that the Poles came as conquerors to take the control of a previous people.

Only these Polish conquerors themselves showed that they were possessed of democratic qualities. They were made virile by the fact that they were exposed to the immigration of many other races and stocks. Vikings met and intermingled with them down the great waterways of the Elbe, the Oder, and the Vistula. In the South they were brought into contact with the splendid, though decaying, civilization of the Byzantine Empire.

In the end they developed an astonishing capacity for conquest and expansion. The earlier Kings of Poland, merely names most of them, are saved from total oblivion in history by the glamour of their military successes. Boleslaw the Brave, for example, is noted for his audacious warfare. He extended the limits of his kingdom to the

Elbe, the Danube, and the Dniester. He made himself apparent even to the overshadowing power of the Holy Roman Empire. He induced the Emperor Otto III to recognize his sovereign rights.

But the Poles could not always sustain themselves at this unbroken height of military pre-eminence. Never has any nation in history experienced such strange and undeserved variations of failure and success as this fascinating and wonderful people. Not theirs—so history seemed determined—to bask in the sun of unbroken prosperity ; not theirs to forge the links of a fixed and unbreakable despotism. From the first there was about them an instinct of variation. They hated the monotonous, the common, or the conventional. Conquerors, they found it impossible to escape from the influences of democracy. They were always trying experiments. They never shrank from the stricken field where a forlorn hope had to be sought or attempted. It was always magnificent—but it was not always what those earlier generations called war.

So it was that Boleslaw III, the Wry-mouthed, divided his domains among his sons—no doubt from a feeling of behaving impartially to each and giving fair play to all. We can dimly give him credit for his motives, but in those bygone times, when States were successful so far as their

domains were coterminous and their authority was centralized and undivided, it was a rash and almost a fatal step.

The results, at any rate, were not long in showing themselves. Hitherto the successors of Boleslaw the Brave had experienced many vicissitudes. They had lost many of the outposts of his original Empire, but they had always ruled over Poland proper, and in the south they had extended to the Carpathians. Now they had to submit to the loss of Silesia and Western Pomerania. The fair domains of the early Polish Empire were rent asunder at two very vital and significant parts.

The full effect of this partition of Boleslaw III will only become apparent in the light of the history of later days. But meantime, in his chivalrous impetuosity we can see the traces of much of that attractive spirit which is making Poland the centre of so many sympathies amid the Great European War of to-day.

Poland is, in fact, possessing her soul.

CHAPTER II

THINGS IN THE SADDLE

POLAND, it can now be seen, had very early economic advantages. Lake Goplo, on the borders of which the Polanie made their original home, was placed at the southern end of a great system of waterways which extended to the Baltic Sea. It was an important meeting-place between East and West. Hither, from the South, came Byzantine agents, carrying with them the fragrant merchandise of the Orient. Thither, from the North, came Normans and Slavs of the Baltic and exchanged for these glories the appropriate productions of their colder climes. Of all the material aids to the development of civilization, the improvement of the means of communication is the simplest and most general, and it can easily be understood that their position on a great and important waterway gave the young Polanie an advantage for the future.

Poland had thus a good economic start. At a very early day things were in the saddle. But in the tenth century, during the reign of

Mieczyslaw I, when the Poles first made a name in history, the water in Lake Goplo had started to diminish rapidly and the lake itself had begun to lose its importance as a great centre of communication. By this time, however, the Polanie had established their predominance over the eastern section of the western group of Slavonic tribes, and had specially subdued the Vislans or Poles around Cracow and the Mazovians or Poles around Warsaw.

These Vislans were a very remarkable people. From the description of Cracow, their capital, given by Al-Bekri, an Arabian geographer of the eleventh century, it may be gathered that the city was built of stone and that it was then a very important centre of trade. This description the Arabian geographer collected from the work of Ibrahim-ibn-Jacob, a Spanish Jew who lived in the tenth century, and it is clear from the further reference of the latter that in his time the Poles were looked upon as one of the greatest of the Slavonic tribes.

The growth of the commerce with the Levant, through the factories of the Italian Republics on the Azov and Black Seas, made it possible for Poland still to remain as a centre of important road communications between East and West. Kiev was one of the chief centres of exchange for these busy Italians, and all the roads from thence to the West led through Lwow and Cracow. It

can thus easily be understood why Cracow occupied such a conspicuous place in the descriptions of the early Arab geographer, and at the same time the significance of the early Polish conquest of the Vislans is displayed in high relief.

This Vislan city of Cracow, great in the days of Al-Bekri and Ibrahim-ibn-Jacob, literally grew from great to greater. The town received a charter. Craft guilds flourished within its precincts. A special kind of boot, much esteemed in the period, was known by the name of "Crakovs." Nor did agriculture lag behind in the general revival. When, in 1393, there was a time of famine in Europe, 300 English, French, and Dutch vessels cruised for the harbour of Dantzic (Gdansk) to receive corn from that inexhaustible granary.

The mention of Dantzic (Gdansk), however, reminds us of another cause of the early commercial glory of Poland. This far-famed city was the head of one of the districts of the Hanseatic League, and is interesting to Great Britain because, from a very early date, English cross-bowmen received wood for their bows from Austria by way of the Vistula. Before the Teutons, through the confederation of the Hansa, gained a leading place in the salted fish trade of the Baltic, it is certain that the Slav inhabitants of the same region had gained some experience in the industry. There is still extant a Polish

poem of rejoicing at a victory won in 1105 over the Teutonic inhabitants of "Salt Kolberg." "Formerly," so sung the hardy conquerors, "they brought us salt and stinking fish, now our sons bring them to us fresh and quivering."

Served by this union of seventy Hansa towns, the Baltic Sea became a leading scene of European commerce. The forests of Poland gave place to fields of corn, flax, and hemp. Metals too, had been found there at a very early date. It is now pretty certain from historical records that the magnum sal of Wicliczka was already worked under the conquering rule of Boleslaw the Brave—that is to say, from about the beginning of the eleventh century. Iron, lead, zinc, copper, and silver were not unknown, though the iron is rather poor for profitable use and has now to be mixed with metals imported from abroad. Yet in these far back times the possession of such marked economic promise gave material power to the conquering arm of Poland.

At first Poland could not enjoy to the full the fruits of these advantages because Dantzic (Gdansk) was in the possession of the Teutonic Knights, and they could levy toll on the proceeds of the industry of interior peoples. But in the fifteenth century, with the fall of Constantinople and the victory over the Teutonic Knights, Polish industry assumed a new significance, and Dantzic reached the culminating point of her importance

for the Slav peoples. In fact, it is not too much to say that it became the sign and symbol of Polish material progress ; and in the later and darker days of the partitions its possession was an object of restless ambition to Prussia, and its loss a mark of the material subjugation of Poland.

It was after the fall of Constantinople, in the brighter days of Poland's conquering expansion, that Warsaw started to become the first city of the kingdom. Mazovia, in which it stood, was a marshy land covered with forests, and it was the last of Poland to come under cultivation. The few practicable roads through this marshy forest converged at Warsaw,¹ where a high hill on the left bank of the Vistula was safe from floods and a narrow low strip was suitable for a pier or bridge. These were decisive advantages in those days of the nation's infant industries, and we cannot be surprised that Warsaw was selected as the place of sitting of the joint Parliament in 1569, when Poland was joined to Lithuania. In 1596 King Sigismund III made Warsaw the official capital.

Then it was that agriculture became revealed as the predominant industry of Poland. The

¹ Mr. Faugreeve ("Geography and World Power," p. 216) has pointed out (1) that the only area common to ancient and modern Poland is a district including Warsaw ; (2) all the riverways of Poland converge on Warsaw.

corn that made Warsaw and Dantzic great was carried down the Vistula in barges, the property of the great landowners. A great deal of misplaced rhetoric has been expended, by those who wish Poland ill, over the iniquities of these landowners. They have been represented as idle and selfish oppressors, cruel to the peasants and contemptuous towards the middle-class burgesses who engaged in trade. As a matter of fact, the Polish landowners simply pursued at first their own agricultural interests, and did not, in the slightest degree, seek to interfere with those of the traders. At a later date, indeed, when Russia began to export large quantities of corn, the gentlemen farmers, unable to meet the severe competition, used their power as a privileged class to free themselves from the burdens of taxation and thus increase the disabilities of the burgesses. But in this they were only following a tendency to use to the full the pride and privileges of power which was even more strongly marked in most of the States whose historians, speaking from the standpoint of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, now most strongly blame them.

As for the agricultural development of Poland generally, it must ever be remembered that she came late into historical view in the comity of nations. She had not so many centuries behind her as a country that started amid the splendid

decay of the Roman Empire ; and therefore, at any given time, she might be expected to be a little later than such countries in her economic evolution. Yet there is a large and generous spirit of tolerance in Polish history which contrasts favourably with the history of most other European nations. There was villainage there, it is true, just as there was villainage to a later date in the surrounding lands, but the state of the peasantry was never so bad as it was in Russia, where the peasants were absolute slaves, and could be taken by their masters to market and sold there like cattle. In Mazovia there is no record of a peasant ever having been chained.

Originally the Polish peasants consisted of two classes, first the free cultivators, and secondly the serfs, who were mainly prisoners of war. As a result, however, of their country's proficiency in martial operations, the free cultivators were ruined, and thereafter there was only a single class of peasants, consisting of men who had the usufruct of land from king, priest, or noble, and who had to pay their proprietors in kind or in work. Then came an influx of immigrants from Flanders in the thirteenth century, and with the foreign invasion contract gradually came to displace status in the agricultural arrangements of Poland. Money rather than payment in kind or in work was the nexus between man and man,

and it cannot be said that in his treatment of his tenants the Polish landowner contrasted unfavourably with any of the landowners of any other country in Europe.

In the fourteenth century, indeed, when the peasants found a protector in Casimir the Great, there were many enactments which move our admiration and sympathy. German colonists had added their experience and influence to that of those who had previously come from Flanders. There were village communities and there was village autonomy. The reeve had three times the size of an ordinary farm, and so much it was still possible to give for as yet there were great quantities of virgin lands. But in the fifteenth century the nobles, encouraged by the development of Western markets, began to exploit the land, and thereafter virgin soil became rarer and rarer. The proprietors cut down forests. They practised enclosure on a big scale. They took away from the reeve the bigger farm. At the same time they worsened the condition of the peasant, whom they now regarded more in the light of a chattel. They prevented the poor man from emigrating to the East or the South. They took away from their tenants the right to appeal to the tribunals of State against the exactions of the lord.

Substantially, this was the state of affairs which lasted right through the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries, and all the lurid and unsympathetic descriptions of Polish landowners date from these particular epochs. Even then, however, it must be remembered that in practice there were many circumstances which, if they are attentively kept in mind, considerably modify our main impression. The village tribunal was under the control of the seigneur. He alone was chief, judge, and administrator. But he could not deal with criminal matters, and in all cases he was bound to act, not arbitrarily, but after due process of law. It has been pointed out in the previous chapter that the Polish people are a people of experiments. They cannot remain for ever and ever on the beaten track. This the landowners proved to perfection in their treatment of the peasants. There were some who made special enactments of surprising breadth and enlightenment. They allowed the community to participate in the jurisdiction of the village. In the eighteenth century many of them gave to their tenants security of tenure and an increase of communal rights, while they anticipated Mr. Lloyd George in their ideas of sickness insurance and our most advanced agricultural reformers in their notions of saving and lending banks.

Of course, there are many rises and falls in this economic progress of the peasantry. It is easy to take some particular decade of fall, and to argue from its history that the condition of

the people in Poland was nothing more nor less than a disgrace to humanity. For example, it must be conceded that in the seventeenth century village autonomy almost entirely disappeared. But then, in the eighteenth century it reappeared in royal and ecclesiastical lands, and these, be it remembered, account for almost 35 per cent. of the total population of the country. It was these same royal lands which, from the end of the sixteenth century, furnished peasant soldiers for the infantry—valiant men who were often enobled in large numbers on the field of battle. Who can say that there was a “great gulf fixed” between nobles and peasantry when it was possible for the peasants to pass by valour from one condition to another?

It may be that Poland would have been benefited by the presence of a larger and more important middle class to take its place between the nobles and the peasantry. When the country passed commercially out of the control of the Hansa, it established special industrial relations with German towns such as Leipzig and Frankfurt-on-the-Oder. It also continued to export timber, flax, hemp, and cattle through Dantzic, Königsberg, and Elburg. But the trade was chiefly in the hands of Dutch and North German merchants. Indeed, most of the perplexities of later Polish economic history are caused by the fact that account has to be taken, in many fields

of commerce and production, of the dominance of foreigners, especially Germans and Jews.

Most important for the development of the country then, as now, was control over the navigation of the Vistula. In her early economic history, as had already been hinted, we can study the vicissitudes of her trade as the Teutonic Knights succeeded in isolating her from the mouth of the Vistula, or in driving a wedge between East and West Prussia. When, in the days of the Jagellonian kings, the power of these Knights was broken, and Poland had again an outlet to the Baltic, it was like putting her into communication with a new and better world.

Surveying the early economic history of this remarkable land as a whole, it is plain that it was chequered and broken. The country had great natural advantages. It had powers and potentialities that fitted it to take a great place among the nations of the world. But it was never fated to remain long at peace. The Poles were always fighting in the last ditch if liberty was to be won for Europe. In the days of John Sobieski, Poland saved Western civilization, but her own economic resources were exhausted by the bloody wars that followed the glorious deliverance.

Even the devices of her democracy did not tend to the development of her material resources. That *Liberum Veto*, which will be dealt with

hereafter, interesting as it may be from the point of view of the political student, prevented the Polish Diet from giving adequate attention to the question of economics.

The star of Poland, however, never shone more brightly than it did in the days of what appeared darkness and defeat. Between the First and Third Partitions, when the armies of the despots were waiting to strike, the thoughts of the citizens were ever turned to economic reform. In many cases the peasants were liberated by their lords and established on small-holdings or received grants of land on condition of devoting a certain measure of their time to their masters' estate. Numerous factories were opened under the auspices of the Government. Facilities were given in many ways for the betterment of agriculture. And yet all this time Poland was on the eve of being deprived of her free control of the navigation of the Vistula !

It is quite certain that, given an adequate measure of fair play, Poland is very well able to hold her own in the economic comity of the nations of Europe. So much appears indubitable from even the most cursory sketch of the development of her material resources.

CHAPTER III

A GLORIOUS DAY

NEED any one wonder that with such a good economic start Poland grew apace? Her people, indeed, were gifted with all the qualities of imperishable life. They annexed territories, They absorbed other nations. Towards the end of the thirteenth century they bade fair to become pre-eminent among the principalities of the world. They were compounded of many elements. They were a hardy, virile stock. One of the Wladyslaws united Great and Little Poland, and had himself crowned in Cracow. Later on the same resolute potentate defeated the Teutonic Knights at Plowce, though he failed to recover the lost Western Pomerania.

There has already been discussed in the Prologue the possibilities of a buffer State. What is a buffer State? A buffer State surely interposes between two colliding countries and prevents a possible catastrophe. It will be shown in the second part of this book how Poland may perform this needed work for Eastern Europe in the

twentieth and succeeding centuries ; but whatever may be her hopes for the future, there can be no doubt that, in her glorious day of the past, she performed the work of a buffer State between civilization and barbarism.

In these far back times what was known as civilization was simply a small oasis in a great desert of surrounding waste. The maps of the period delineated a few countries encompassed by chaos and old night, just as Perseus, in the old Greek legend, needed to journey only a few short days before he reached the Unshapen Land. Everywhere the barbarians hovered on the outskirts of civilization. Right from the depths of mysterious Asia swarmed the Tartars in the thirteenth century, first falling on the hapless Ruthenians and then making straight for Poland.

What was to be done? Unless the buffer State interposed an obstacle, civilization was seriously threatened. But the Western States were soon removed from the risk of sudden calamity. Once again the Poles showed that they could always be relied on at a due extremity: at Leignitz in Silesia the hordes of the Tartars were arrested by the Polish chivalry. Christianity had been saved by the steadfastness of this indomitable race.

It was wonderful how quickly the Poles recovered from these many sacrifices imposed on them by the need of Christendom. Casimir the Great, who has always been mentioned on account

of his reforming legislation, won back all the lands previously conquered by Boleslaw the Brave, but since then lost to his country in the many military vicissitudes of the time. His successor, Louis d'Anjou, King of Hungary, accorded great privileges to the nobility in order to draw them closer round his throne. Although we have already made the acquaintance of the Polish nobles in their capacity of landowners, it will be necessary again to inquire more closely as to their exact position and prerogatives.

Meantime, we can note Poland's approach to the glorious day of Jagellonian power, when her sway extended from the Baltic to the Adriatic and Black Seas, and when all obstacles seemed to disappear before her conquering hands. It is this epoch of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which the German historians particularly admire in their histories of Poland. For then a succession of kings are responsible for its policy who succeed each other as by right divine, and who owe the greater part of their prestige to the military success of their arms.

It would, however, be a great mistake to conclude that Poland, at any stage of her history, was ever dominated by the administrative traditions of Prussianism. The Poles never regarded as serious these dogmas of passive obedience and the inviolability of the Lord's anointed which were wrought out in surrounding

States as a consequence of the sixteenth-century movement in favour of the supremacy of the secular power. Never could a Polish ruler have succeeded in proclaiming the omnipotence of the iron fist.

Consider, for example, how Lithuania became united to Poland, and thus contributed to lay deep the foundations of Jagellonian power. There was first, as so often happened in these days when land was added to land, a matrimonial union. The young Polish Queen Jadwiga married the Lithuanian Prince Jagiello, but Lithuania certainly did not become an integral part of Poland simply owing to the exigencies of matrimonial convenience.

If ever any union was more particularly a union of hearts, it was this between Poland and Lithuania. The lords and nobles of each of the contracting parties met at Horodlo on the Bug, and there swore a pact of eternal friendship. On the one hand, Lithuania would profit by Poland's achievements in Western civilization. On the other hand, the Poles would learn for ever the lesson that they could rule other peoples best by suffering those other peoples to rule themselves.

Lithuania was to have her own rights of internal self-government. Neither act of the Legislature nor administrative decree could limit the powers or the privileges of her people. It was by the

voluntary choice of the Lithuanians themselves that Polish became the current tongue of Lithuania. Whilst Prussia was trampling Posen under the iron heel of her power, she could proclaim German by administrative ordinance as the compulsory tongue, but she could never really ensure that it should be used at the hearths and homes of the people. In the case of this union between Poland and Lithuania the conditions were exactly reversed. The Ruthenian tongue was freely tolerated as the official medium, but this well-placed generosity only inclined the people to discard their own tongue and take by preference and affection to the Polish.

Poland, in those bygone days of her dominion, showed, in fact, that she could become a great and successful colonizer. Germany has always failed in this direction because she has never had the flexibility to adapt herself to the different varieties of national thought and life. But Poland conquered at the end by seeming to give way at the beginning to all the demands of national separateness and even prejudice. The numerous German immigrants who made their home in the towns were not forbidden the use of the German tongue. In fact, they were legally entitled to avail themselves of their mother language on public occasions and before the law-courts. But just because they were led, not driven, they began to manifest a desire to study the Polish language

and to adopt Polish habits of thought. In the end, the Poles assimilated them as they never would have done had they stood rigidly, and firmly against their possession of any power or privileges.

In such a spiritual fashion the Polish realms were firmly cemented together. The country seemed destined to go on in triumph from more to more. All Europe knew the glorious power and potentialities of this remarkable Slavonic race. We have seen how Cracow became a centre of expanding trade. It must now be added that the same city became a centre of humanism. Copernicus gained lustre for the Polish race in the realms of learning. At the battle of Grünwald in 1410 the power of the Teutonic Knights was decisively shattered. What might not be expected from such a powerful and intelligent people?

Yet even at this time of transcendent achievement—an apogee of the power of Poland—there were circumstances which pointed the way to a temporary decline. The great things the people meditated and attempted were almost too great for such an early and primitive age. The Polish historical philosophers, deeply affected by the classical writers, and pushed on by all that was best in the spirit of the Reformation, gave their assent to two cardinal and sweeping principles: first, that the best form of government is a republic, and second, that all men are equal

before the law, and absolutely free so long and so far as they act within the limits of that law. Although in our own day Portugal has become a Republic, and France, Switzerland, and the United States continue firm in their adopted faith, yet even in the nineteenth century the republican propagandist, as Mazzini found to his cost, was too often a prophet crying in the wilderness. How, then, could there be any field for the speculations of the Polish thinkers in the sixteenth or the seventeenth centuries?

It has been casually pointed out that Polish political philosophy was much influenced by the classical models, and this thought has continually to be kept in mind when we are considering the peculiarities of her Constitution at the noontide of her glorious day. The influence of her nobility grew from year to year. As these chevaliers, often by the sacrifice of the life blood of those who were dearer to them than life, had gained the victory on many a fiercely contested field of battle, they thought they were entitled, as a certain measure of reward for their exertions, to the possession of certain privileges. Power came as a right to the strong arm and the stout heart, and we have seen that on royal estates the peasant could be ennobled if he had shown pre-eminent valour on the stricken field. But all the same, the ultimate result showed that Poland could never become one of those efficient but

despotic administrative States which were rapidly forming themselves among the powerful peoples around her borders. In France and in England the emergence of the modern polity was accompanied by a strengthening of the royal power at the expense of the feudal nobles. In Poland the reverse process took place. The nobles grew great at the expense of the royal power.

The Polish Diet was divided, like most modern Parliaments, into two chambers. The Senate was composed of lay and ecclesiastical dignitaries, and the Chamber of Deputies of representatives of the nobility elected at their local Diets. There was perfect and unfettered liberty of election. Both at the general and at the local Diet a man was free to express his own opinion according to the dictates of his own individual conscience. No one could be arrested unless a warrant had been obtained against him at a legally constituted tribunal, or unless he had been caught redhanded in the actual perpetration of a crime. Such were the constitutional liberties, great and wonderful for their time, which showed the predominant spirit of the Polish race during the fifteenth and at the beginning of the sixteenth century. What further claims in the name of freedom might not yet be made and attempted?

Lithuania knew the result of the encroaching Liberalism in the public affairs of Poland. It has already been pointed out that the union

between Poland and Lithuania was a real union of hearts. Lithuanians were allowed the use of their own language. They could administer their local affairs in their own particular way. And yet there was still a difference between the King of Poland in Poland and the King of Poland in Lithuania. In Poland he was a constitutional sovereign; in Lithuania he had an absolute prerogative. Such a difference could not be permitted long to remain with a nation so liberally inclined as the Poles. In 1569 the last Jagellonian king summoned the Lithuanian nobility to the Diet of Lublin, and thus completely united the two nations as one great and transcendent Polish republic.

So far Poland has appeared a model of constitutional freedom to the rest of Europe. At that time there were but two great nations—England and Poland—which enjoyed the privileges of anything like real parliamentary government. It was only at the expense of multifarious and costly sacrifices that other European nations attained to the same exalted level at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Poland was then at a much earlier date in the forefront of the race for liberty. How did it happen that her freedom of franchise was reserved so exclusively for the nobility alone?

The reason is to be found in the peculiar

position and large numbers of the Polish nobles. They were the descendants of conquerors, but they had yielded to the importunate claims of democracy. They were never a small and select class, united only by the possession of special privileges, and vowed to defend the integrity of their vested rights. They numbered about a tenth of the whole population. They had no exclusive titles. They were absolutely free and equal among themselves. Not till later days, when, as was shown in the preceding chapter, the export of Russian corn threatened their economic solvency, did they attempt to interfere with the commercial freedom of the middle classes. They were, in fact, an *ávator* of the Athenian *Ekklesia* as it existed in the days of Pericles, and they accepted the same point of view in relation to the trader and the serf as the Athenians did to their vast army of slaves. Only the noble and the citizen had fully developed their manhood. Only they therefore could lay claim to the fundamental civic rights. It all appears very insignificant when judged by the democratic standards of a later time, and yet it pushed its roots deep and yet deeper down among the noblest achievements of classical literature and art.

Now is the opportunity, however briefly, to summarize the circumstances which prepared the way for future troubles, and showed that Poland's

glorious day might soon fade away to an untimely end. The first cause of bitterness arose from the very revolutionary nature of the Polish progress. The nation, advancing itself out of its due time, was literally attempting to stem all the main currents of European history. Everywhere administration, the power of the king or the bureaucrat, was gaining ground over local liberties in the developing centres of European civilization. The king imposed his will on the whole borders of a definite area of territory. The king broke the power of the feudal nobles. The king handed his domains to his son or heir. The king controlled the army and appointed judges. The king was himself above and beyond all the reaches of his own law. And all this was absolutely contrary to the direction of the political evolution of Poland.

There the king grew less and less powerful, and the central Diet was less and less able to enforce its ideas of legislation. Social freedom was won at the expense of uniform central control. After 1572, when the last Jagellonian monarch breathed his last, Poland had no longer her hereditary kings. Each noble claimed the power, if he so wished, of arresting the progress of the wheels of State. From one point of view, it was a salutary protest against the power of the steam-roller in public affairs. Citizens could never be at the mercy of the Juggernaut car of some

implacable and hardened administrator. But from another point of view it was heaping up the seeds of future disintegration and ruin. No individuals—not even the nation, which is the individual writ large—can manage without a due meed of suffering to be completely in advance of the tendencies of their own particular time.

This spirit of enlightenment was, in fact, the first influence which prepared the way for future trouble in Poland. The second came from a certain chivalry—without fear and without reproach—which, as has already been seen, characterized, from the very beginning, the Polish people, and which has so often been ill requited amid the Machiavellan combinations so characteristic of the political statecraft of the period.

When Poland broke the power of the Teutonic Knights, she was unwilling entirely to crush them. She left Eastern Prussia with Königsberg still in her power. At the same time the last of the Grand Masters of the Order, Albert von Brandenburg, proclaimed himself Hereditary Duke of Prussia, and did homage to Sigismund I, who was then King of Poland.

This homage was only for the day. But Prussia remained on the following day, and Poland soon found that Prussia was to continue a perpetual thorn in her side. All history shows that where the territories of a State are not absolutely co-terminous, where a band of neutral or hostile

land breaks the complete unity of the king's peace, the State which is so circumstanced becomes surprisingly dissatisfied and restless. It never can be contented until it includes all the intervening lands within its own particular boundaries. Its vaulting ambition never rests until it leaps the intervening space.

So it was with Prussia. The aim and ambition of her leaders was to absorb a part of Poland while Poland was dreaming of a still more glorious freedom for the fullness of her days. Had Poland dealt with the Teutonic Knights as Prussia dealt with Poland, the course of European history would have taken quite another channel. The vultures could never have gathered to feast on the body of their slain.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FREEDOM OF FAITH

POLISH history can never be adequately understood without some recognition of the power of religion. To-day the Polish peasant bows his head at the remembrance of heavenly realities just as the labouring man, in the famous picture of Millet, inclines in lowly reverence at the familiar sound of the Angelus. In the sixteenth century the Polish nobles did not remain unaffected by all the claims for fuller freedom of thought and life which came in the wake of the reforming and Calvinist doctrines which were then imported into the country.

In the beginning, their nation grew strong through the religious choice of one of its earliest kings. It had to defend itself against the aggressiveness of the Holy Roman Empire, which towered over Europe with the implied assumption that all Christendom could be brought together under a single autocratic sway. In these days the wars waged by Western civilization were mostly connected with the propagation of a

religious faith. The doctrine of independent States had not yet come into being. All nations were only smaller parts of the same greater fold.

But the infidel had to be subdued. The heretic had to be forcibly converted. The supremacy of those in authority had to be vindicated and maintained. And so Peter the Hermit preached a crusade, and bishops blessed the banner of those who, with fire and sword, tried to make untutored nations acknowledge the power of the Christian name.

The year 964, however, marks a culminating epoch in the religious history of Poland. In that year, King Mieczyslaw I married Princess Dombrowka of Bohemia, and signalized his marriage by adopting the Roman Catholic faith. The consequences of this act of decision were momentous. At once the pretext was taken from the Holy Roman Empire of declaring a religious crusade against Poland with fire and sword. The eastward movement of the Teutons in the upper and middle basin of the Vistula was stopped, and it was only in the lower part of the river that these dread enemies managed to establish themselves in the fourteenth century.

Undoubtedly this selection of the Roman Catholic Church by a Polish king had more than merely temporary results. It was not for one day or for the day following, but for a whole generation, that it eased the pressure of the nation's

enemies. It divided the Slavonic race into two groups which progressed on different lines. The Poles and the Czechs evolved a civilization essentially of the Western type. The Southern Slavs, the Ruthenians, and Russians, on the other hand, embraced the Church of Constantinople and developed along Eastern models. The one followed Rome, the other followed Byzantium. No one who has not grasped the significance of this very fundamental fact can understand the situation of Poland as it presents itself to-day.

As a matter of fact, the adoption of Western Christianity by the Poles soon brought in its train the transplantation of Western civilization to Ruthenia and Lithuania. The latter country was pagan before the marriage which united its fortunes with those of Poland, and the Teutonic Knights were endeavouring to teach it the law of love by the use of the mailed fist. Heavy Church dues were imposed on the luckless people who were unfortunate enough to be trodden beneath the feet of the conqueror. Christian Kultur has not uniformly availed itself of the methods of Christian persuasion.

In the end, however, the Poles saw the triumphant dawn of their glorious day, and they rid themselves for many years of this formidable foe. In 1410 Jagiello inflicted a crushing defeat on the Order of the Cross, and in this battle the future Hussite champion, John Ziska, is said to

have taken part. It is true that Hussism had never more than a transitory influence in Poland, and that at one time five Hussite preachers were publicly burned to death in the market-place of Posen. But isolated instances are not really indicative of a general tendency, and the fact that John Huss himself sent congratulations to Jagiello on his victory shows that, in his opinion, the advantage won at that time by the Poles over the Teutonic Knights would redound to the interests of religious liberty and freedom.

Then, as always, save for a few dark and bitter years in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Poles allowed a liberty of dissenting belief rare in the days of religious intolerance and persecution. During the reign of Sigismund I, when the Reformers were gaining a firm footing in the country, we hear of severe penal statutes, and we can obtain several instances of the burning of heretics by different members of the nobility. But there is no evidence to support the conclusion that these were other than isolated acts of intolerance, and as for the penal statutes it is one thing, after a palace intrigue, to put a new administrative ordinance on the Statute Book, and another and very different thing to possess the power and authority to carry it into the systematic and continuous routine of daily government and administration.

The Polish nobility would have been false to

all their most deeply cherished traditions if they had settled down to religious persecution as an ordinary incident of their administrative life. All accounts concede to their Government, in its treatment of the Jews, a far more enlightened tolerance than can be credited to any other Christian nation during the Middle Ages. Casimir the Great protected the Jewish immigrants in questions both of civil and religious liberty, and the economic development of the country owes not a little to such rare manifestations of regard for the freedom of faith.

It was not to be expected that Poland would be isolated from the great movement of the Reformation. It has ever been the characteristic of her people to be vitally responsive to every wind of doctrine that revives the sacred embers of liberty and freedom. Besides, she occupied a strategic position in the great European arena where the battles of religion were fought and won. On one flank of her the Greek Church maintained its cherished services. On the other flank the German heretics made their protest against the ecclesiasticism of the past. She herself was a bride of the Church—and the Church looked to her affianced to be true till death. But the Polish nobility never accepted the doctrines of the Council of Trent, and the Catholic clergymen only accepted them conditionally in 1564. Fourteen years later, it is true, these same clergy

submitted themselves unconditionally to this same celebrated Council ; but this does not alter the fact that, throughout such a large range of her history, Poland was free of that cruel and continuous religious oppression which stains the annals of most of the other nations of that ruthless and bygone time.

There can be no doubt that Poland owes this broad religious tolerance to the instincts of freedom deeply cherished by her nobility. To them the Church, as a governing institution, too often presented itself as identified with the dominance of the Senate and Royal Council, or of the wealthier dignitaries in the nation they loved so well. They could not brook a narrow oligarchy—whether that oligarchy spoke in the name of Church or State. When the great clerical prelates claimed to summon them before their Courts, they passionately protested in the tempestuous and crowded Diet of 1552. At the subsequent Diet of Piotrkow in 1558 it was even attempted to exclude the Bishops entirely from the Senate. When the Primate Uchanski, on hearing of the death of Sigismund Augustus, invited only the senators of Great Poland to a conference at Lowicz, the great body of the nobility, who were thus autocratically ignored, broke out into a wild riot of rebellion.

How could they do otherwise? The Polish chevaliers were no narrow oligarchy of feudal

freebooters. They were the free and equal members of a great national *Ekklesia*. They had been nourished on the immortal literature of Greece and Rome. They refused to bow the knee in secular affairs either to king or Pope. "Where the law rules," so protested Orzechowski, "even the King our lord cannot do what he likes : he must do what the law prescribes." Jan Laski, a nephew of the Primate, a friend of Cranmer and Erasmus, continued to hold the rich canonry of Gnesen a long while after he had publicly professed the tenets of the Reformers. It has been said by a Hungarian biographer that had the same Laski lived a little longer, Poland might have seen her King Sigismund Augustus become a convert to the Reformed religion. However that may be, it is certain that the Polish nobility required a fair field for the new ideas and no foreign interference.

Whilst the nobles in this way proclaimed their undying adhesion to the cause of tolerance and freedom, the quiet agricultural population of the kingdom cared little for these embittered cries of deadly religious war. All classes loved the old hierarchy and ritual, the quaint ceremonies and ancient feasts and fasts which had become so essentially a part of their own daily life. Even when the nobles protested against undue ecclesiastical assumption they did so rather on national than on religious grounds. Their efforts chiefly

led in the direction of a release of the Church from dependence on Rome and the formation of a Council of Bishops under the presidency of the King as the supreme power in religious matters.

It was this fidelity of a staunch Slavonic people to the ritual amidst which they had been born and bred that ultimately brought about the victory of the Church over the influences of the Reformation. Towards the end of the seventeenth century there ensued an epoch of religious persecution. All dissidents were forbidden public office. They could never enter the Diet. It was a dark and deplorable time: and it gave the Empress Catherine a pretext for interfering in the affairs of Poland. But in these difficult and darkest days the heretic always retained his property. And he was never absolutely barred from the ascent to place and power. Warned off from the Diet, he could enter the army, and there he would find every kind of distinction open to his aspiration and achievement. No Pole can completely deliver himself, body and soul, to the spirit of reaction. He may speed a certain way on the downward path, but he is ultimately and firmly held back. His native respect for the manifestations of man's free spirit is sure to conquer in the end.

Thus it was also that in the epoch of persecution there emerged the Uniates or Ruthenians, who united the Roman Catholic and Greek

Churches. It is a much cherished aspiration of our enlightened days to behold rival sectaries dwell together in unity and peace. Why should Episcopalian and Presbyterian or Roman Catholic and Greek Churchman look upon themselves as not of each other's fold? Why, indeed? And yet, so great and insurmountable are the antagonisms of the past, that very little that is practical has been done to-day in the direction of an actual union. It was reserved for the Ruthenian people to find a mode of reconciliation in which the ancient Slavonic ritual of the Greek Church was happily wedded with the doctrines and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic system. Ecclesiastics like Peter Skarga, Jesuit and patriot, found it consonant with their papal allegiance to give an unswerving support to this project of reconciliation.

There can be no manner of doubt that Poland could not to-day, in any conjunction of circumstances, be a permanently persecuting Power. It might suit the agents of the Empress Catherine in the dubious hours that preceded the Partition to represent Poland as a menace to the Greek Christians who had submitted to her sway. Likewise Frederick the Great could, if it so pleased him, assume the rôle of a protector of the Protestants. Yet when the Diet adopted a new Constitution in 1791, they made it a leading principle of their reformed State that there should

be freedom of faith ; that, while the Roman Catholic hierarchy should be the established system, there should be a perfect tolerance for every other sect. A man cannot be judged in his individual life by one or two isolated actions. To them he may have been urged by a passing gust of passion, while deep down in the central arcanum of his being his honour and self-restraint remain unsullied and secure. Why should there be one law for the individual and another for the greater Leviathan of the national thought and history?

In the religious phases of her life, as in all others, Poland ever grew great by permitting and encouraging variation. Her rulers were powerless to arrest the working of man's free spirit. They were obliged to recognize that only by the united and unimpeded work of many generations of willing workers could the foundations of the city of God be well and truly laid.

CHAPTER V

PROMETHEUS BOUND

VARIATION, it has now been recognized, is the law of Poland's social and political life. She has ever dared to be peculiar. When the other States around her were developing to a unitary type, and all licence of individual combination and experiment was suppressed by the bureaucratic despotism of the Bourbons, the Romanoffs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Habsburgs, Polish landowners, as we have already shown, were experimenting with all kinds of advanced ideas in their management of their estates, and Polish noblemen—even the poorest of them—claimed an equal right to the possession of place and power. The supreme dignity of the State was elective. A single dissenting voice could suspend a decision of her Parliament. Was there ever a more gallant insistence on the inviolability of the human spirit?

Yet in this world it is too often the humdrum and the complacent natures which sip the joy of calm and uninterrupted success. Had

Prometheus been content to be submissive and respectable, as others were, he would never have sought to draw fire from heaven to introduce a newer radiance into the life of men, and he would certainly never have incurred the undying wrath of Zeus. As it is in the affairs of men, so it is in the larger and more complex affairs of nations. It was only the State transformed into an administrative despotism which could send its head to consort with the heads of the other similarly constituted States, and which could thus earn a safe and comfortable place in the polity of nations. There was one country indeed, Great Britain, which might have been expected to cherish a fellow-feeling for Poland, but, as we have seen in the Prologue, there were certain circumstances which, in the hour of Poland's greatest need, prevented that fellow-feeling from becoming manifest in the world of deeds.

Poland, in fact, like Prometheus, lay exposed to the attacks of greedy and rapacious foes. Indeed, there was little to protect her from their insensate covetousness. Her territory was situated among no high and inaccessible crags of the Caucasus, but in a great European plain where armies could march and counter-march, and where few obstacles were opposed by Nature to the perpetration of the most nefarious designs. How could a nation so advanced as this fail to arouse the suspicions of those whose main

endeavour was to avoid the spirit of change and to broadbase the prerogative of their emperors and war-lords on the consent of a subjugated and acquiescent people? With all the faults of the ancient Constitution of Poland, there was about it a certain breadth and suggestiveness, an adumbration of all the most revolutionary conceptions of developed democracy, which fairly took away the breath of the bureaucratic chancellors of the eighteenth century.

In another respect Poland's condition was nearly akin to that of Prometheus—she was surrounded by enemies who could most aptly be likened to birds of prey. De Tocqueville has somewhere pointed out that the despotic State is always more ready and successful at the game of war than the more developed and democratic nation. Later on, he contends indeed, the balance is redressed and the scales are turned, but at first the State whose people move like marionettes at the ruler's word of command can always be trusted to submit itself with the least observable friction to the exigencies of military necessity. The Polish chevalier called no man master. If his services were enlisted in the game of war he must know for what cause he was expected to fight. He would maintain no ambassadors to countenance a diplomacy which rested on the recognition of a release of the State from the ordinary obligations of individual morality. He

could brook no supreme and irresponsible warlord. Small wonder, then, that, like vultures gnawing at the lion's flesh, the predatory States around Poland were ever casting greedy and envious eyes at her fairest stretches of territory.

From the reign of John Casimir down to the days of the Third Partition, it seemed as if all the neighbouring Powers were throwing themselves successively on the doomed and freedom-loving land. First came the Cossacks—a people organized more rigidly than most for military triumph and adventure. They were originally intended to protect Western civilization from the Tartar inroads. But too often the cure was worse than the disease, especially when the Cossacks revolted from their paymaster, and sought the alliance of the Tartar Khan. It was one of the generous mistakes which so often cost Poland dear when John Sobieski gave Kiev and Smolensk to Russia, and thus put the Cossacks of the Ukraine under the practical protection of the Colossus. At any rate Russia was not very long in utilizing this help to make herself a persistent and insatiable enemy of Poland.

Troubles seldom come singly. So it is in life, so it was with Poland. Seeing the defenceless state of the country with its encompassing girdle of foes, the King of Sweden crossed the Baltic and soon gained the advantage with the help of his very numerous armies. The situation

appeared more desperate than ever. In the camp of the threatened land there were those who deemed it to be the best policy to make submission to the conquering invader. The army was only a handful. There was little but the star of a nation left. But, then as always, the star of Poland never showed itself so bright and resplendent as in the days of darkness and defeat.

A merely military State may sunder and disappear. Assyria has vanished from the earth. Rome can decline and perish. Their regulative system was in the hands of the few. Destroy the main wheel of the machinery, and then you may discover that no workmen have been brought up to repair the injury. But whenever the social system rests on any extended basis of social co-operation and combination, then it is much more difficult to reach a really critical corner. A democratic nation seems dowered with the inestimable gift of everlasting existence. Destroy its central Government, and its people organize a little provisional Government of their own. States may rise and fall around it. The death of a despot may mean the collapse of a whole system of administration. But the nation still exists where two or three are gathered together. In the midst of a troubled arena of plots and counter-plots it ever remains alert, alive, and immortal.

It was because Poland was no mere military

State dependent simply on the governance or the caprice of a few that it was able to confront and survive the hardest shocks of an untimely fate ! The heroic defence of the monastery of Jasna Gora at Czenstochowa was the first symptom of her reawakened powers. The second was the rise into fame of one amongst many of her true heroes, Stefan Czarniecki. This heroic son of a heroic people managed to collect the scattered forces of his race. He breathed into these remnants the spirit of his own true patriotism. He infused into their hearts the desire to sacrifice their own personal life for the future glory of their race.

Thanks to this high access of patriotism, they were able to check the conquering crusade of the Swedes. The dreaded invaders were expelled from Polish territory. Again the nation had a short interval of peace.

Yet Prometheus had no abiding rest. The wrath of Zeus was relentless. Even while Poland drove the invaders from her land, she was giving facilities for an invasion deadlier and more persistent still. After the Swedish victories she relieved the Elector of Brandenburg, commonly known as the Great Elector, of all his duties of vassalage. It was one of those small events that nevertheless change the course of history. The Hohenzollerns were not slow to improve such an opportunity. From a state of vassalage the rulers

of Prussia soon emerged the most scientific, yet the most implacable, of Poland's foes.

Behold, however, this devoted nation, at a crisis of her fate, standing forth as the champion of Western civilization against the ruthless Turkish power in the pride of its conquering strength! In the second half of the seventeenth century the Crescent was a menace to Europe. Already masters of the strategical points of the Balkan peninsula, the Turks had, at last, invaded Hungary. In the reign of John Sobieski they attacked Vienna, and forced the Emperor of Germany to flee from what appeared his destined doom. Only Poland stood between the Holy Roman Empire and the inrush of the Gaiour. In 1683 the heroic John Sobieski put the hosts of the invader to flight, and from that very day the Turkish power continued visibly to decline.

Poland has deserved well of Europe, and it might have been supposed that Western Christendom would have felt an eternal obligation to this brave people for its victorious defence against the common foe. But there is small gratitude in politics. Justice and mercy, though more and more enthroned in the sanctuaries of the private life, have not yet been elevated to the rank of authoritative motives in the direction of international affairs. Not long after Poland had practically saved civilization, the predatory States of the civilization she had saved were

practically gnawing at the vitals of her prostrate body.

Partly she herself had contributed to her own helpless condition. There is no doubt that, exhausted economically by a long course of sanguinary wars, she was now entering on the darkest and most torturing moment of her history. There were still the outward trappings of freedom and democracy. The nobles were gathered together in their ancient *Ekklesia* to decide the country's fate. Any one noble could object to a proposal and so nullify the votes of all his neighbours. It appeared the most superb exaggeration of the claims of individual freedom ; and yet, so long as public life was vigorous, and the nation's aspirations were pure and exalted, it might have remained as a beacon light pointing the way to a democratic future for Europe. But this was a time when public life was decaying, and the nobles had forgotten their high estate. The army had become the mere skeleton of its former strength. There was little or no coin in the public treasury.

On the outskirts of this attenuated life the vultures were gathering. France and Austria disputed the hegemony of Europe, and France and Austria both had their eye on Poland. Prussia was beginning to pay her homage to the doctrine of the iron fist. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Suffolk, was either complacent or

neutral. Russia had joined the European system, and henceforth Russia ranged herself with the predatory Powers who sought the ruin of Poland.

In 1732 there was given the first warning of a partition. In that year the Courts of Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Vienna concluded a convention which is known in history under the name of the Alliance of the Three Black Eagles. The cause of the convention was noteworthy and characteristic. Poland, as has been pointed out, was distracted by internal unrest. For the first time in her history she had been the scene of systematic religious persecution. But the spirit of her people was unbroken. With that power of combination to meet the most difficult emergencies which is only possessed by democratic nations, she had set herself to repair the errors of the past. Aware by sad and bitter experience that the unitary State is most efficient in war, she laboured to amend the weak places in her Constitution after the torturing efforts of the vultures. This did not suit the evil intentions of these baleful birds of prey. They desired Poland to die after due suffering and agony. Prometheus must never be allowed to escape from the iron rod of Hæphæstos. So the three high contracting parties covenanted to oppose with all their united strength any changes or reforms which the Poles deemed it right to make in their political institutions.

Qualified all of them for this hard-hearted work, these unitary despotisms of the Near East hastened to ruin Poland by all the devices of Machiavellan diplomacy. The last King of Poland was a creature of the Empress Catherine. Her Ambassador in Warsaw grew so powerful that he was able to secure the arrest in the capital itself of any senators or deputies who dared to give a vote contrary to the desires of his mistress. Poland, of course, did not endure all this tyranny in a passive mood. Supported by the French Minister Choiseul, a military league called the Confederation of Bar was formed to evict the Russian troops who had comfortably installed themselves in the country. It was all of no avail. A sanguinary fight was waged for years, but the odds against the devoted country were far too great.

In 1772, accordingly, there took place the First Partition of Poland. The vultures were preying on the hero's flesh. Austria took Western Galicia, which is still in her possession, but the most notable fact about the Partition was that Frederick the Great, though he claimed Western Prussia, still left Dantzic and Thorn to his victim. We have already seen how important a part Dantzic has played in the economic fortunes of Poland. It secured to her the complete control of the navigation of the Vistula. It was equally necessary to Frederick, if no alien wedge was to

separate one part from another of his vast domains. Without Dantzic and Thorn it was very certain that Prussia would hover on the flanks of the weakened Poland, always restless and perpetually ready to spring. Why did the King of Prussia behave with such apparent moderation? It could only be because he did not intend this Partition to be the last. The vultures would not be content with a single meal.

Most nations, in such an hour of supreme agony, would have lost both head and heart. But not so Poland. Her apparently hopeless position only roused in her governing democracy of nobles the best and most unselfish energies of their nature. They would make their country great even in the hour of torture and defeat, and as all the evils in human government ultimately spring from ignorance, selfishness, and indolence, they would see to it that they secured, in the bitterest crisis of their fate, a broad-minded and instructed people.

In 1774 they instituted what was, in effect, the first Ministry of Public Education in Europe. For twenty years, under the guidance of the Minister so appointed, a Commission went about the country, visiting the universities, reorganizing the secondary schools, and putting the curriculum of the primary schools on a newer and more scientific basis. Literature was reborn. Journalism became a power in the land. The political

philosophers refreshed themselves at the classic fountains of Greece and Rome.

Yet more must be done to save the nation from the insatiable talons of the birds of prey. Moral strength, though it must ultimately dictate the destinies of the universe, is not immediately efficacious in a world of steel and gold. Russia looked askance at all these noble efforts at reform. It was almost ten years after Poland that the bureaucrats of the Colossus manifested any desire for a Ministry of Public Instruction. Nevertheless Russia, unfortunately, had at this time the command of the big battalions. Austria was occupied with the Turks. And yet, with Russia hostile and Prussia restless, what dark fate might not have been expected for Poland?

Look where the harassed nation might, there seemed no hope of deliverance. France, which seemed friendly to her in the dark days before the First Partition, had latterly sought closer relations with Russia, and had, in fact, concluded a commercial treaty with her in 1786. We have already shown in the Prologue how Pitt was thwarted in his first desire to bring some sort of succour from one democratic nation to another in her need.

Poland, in fact, friendless and forsaken, was obliged to use her own high courage to revivify her tortured energies. She was bound, if she was to preserve her being at all, to develop

some of the effective capabilities of the predatory despotisms around her. Her treasury must be refilled. Her army must be made more numerous and efficient. The King must be hereditary. The *Liberum Veto* must be abolished. It all involved a surrender of democratic aspirations dear to the Polish heart, but it was only in this way that the country could hope to make any stand against her dreaded foes.

Still, the Constitution of May 3, 1791, although an effort to give to Poland some of the efficiencies of a unitary State, is yet full of evidences of the spirit of progress and freedom. It won the enthusiastic commendation of Edmund Burke. It assured the peasants of the protection of the law. It made burgesses and nobles equal before the law. Who can say, with the evidence of this effort before him, that Poland brought on her own partition, because of the weakness of her own internal anarchy?

Of course, the new Constitution was bound to create differences of opinion. A section of the nobles formed the Confederation of Targowica. It is pretty certain that this Confederation was mainly engineered by Russia, and that its handful of supporters were handsomely helped by Russian gold. But there may have been many others in the country who did not quite agree with the new Constitution from motives that were not entirely ignoble. They were genuinely attached

to the old relics of democratic experiment, and they could not bear to see Poland under the sway of a hereditary monarch who might yet found another military despotism.

They might have saved themselves their fears. The predatory States had no mind to see their prey revive and escape from their torturing talons. Yet ere Poland was obliged to succumb to a Second and Third Partition she made one more effort to profit by the practices of the unitary States. She contracted a treaty of alliance with Prussia, on the basis of a mutual guarantee of their respective territories, in case one or the other were attacked by a third Power. When she entered on this treaty she meant what she undertook. Not so Prussia. That country only intended to observe an engagement when and so long as it was profitable so to do. Thus it came about that when Russia had finished with the Turks and had then turned her strength against Poland, Poland asked Prussia to take up the obligations of her treaty. To all these appeals, however, Prussia only turned a deaf ear.

The reason was characteristic. It showed the predatory instincts, at the red-ripe of a vulture's heart. Prussia had no real desire to bring any sort of succour to Poland. In reality she found a higher happiness in watching with greedy eyes a suppliant and dismembered nation. It is not surprising, with such feelings in the

air, that Poland had to submit to a Second Partition of territories, from which Austria was excluded, but in which Prussia soothed her restless heart by the acquisition of Dantzic and Thorn.

Still Poland was undaunted. She bore her tortures with the utmost bravery and fortitude. She possessed in her heart the priceless secret of an imperishable life. Maim her, harass her, divide her territory among the vultures, deprive her of every facility for manifesting her national life, and there it remains, enduring and unhurt in the hour of extremity, ever ready to revive again and manifest its power at the slightest opportunity. After the Second Partition there was a threat to reduce her army, and this was sufficient to revive what seemed the prostrate frame to a great effort of rebellion.

This was the famous fight of 1794, with which the name of Kosciuszko is inseparably associated. One of its most striking features was that it really reached the peasantry and enrolled them, in strict and stalwart comradeship, to defend their outraged nation. Hitherto it had been a defect of the classical republicanism of the Poles that only the nobles had the full possession of the franchise. Now, however, Kosciuszko called the people to his help, and in every way he promised to improve their legal and economic position. Thus the last shred of aristocratic exclusiveness was removed from the programme of Polish

reform. From 1794 to our own day Poland has stood for liberty and fraternity in every grade and relation of life and thought.

It was in this period, most of all, that Poland inspired the deepest and finest sympathies of the friends of liberty all over Europe. Kosciuszko became a figure of romance. His country was the symbol of the everlasting contest against tyranny and oppression. The French Revolution had room to develop and grow strong, because the autocrats had their hands full with Poland. When Kosciuszko was at last felled by the power of the mailed fist at Maciejowice, it was felt that the spirit of freedom, too, lay crushed and prostrate, and all that was most progressive in Western civilization was seriously imperilled.

For the time the vultures were left in peace to feast on their victim's flesh. Britain, as we have seen, saw in the tortured Prometheus a friend of France, and did not venture to come between her enemies and their prey. The defeat of Kosciuszko was followed by a Third Partition in 1795, when Prussia was still further aggrandized by the possession of Central and Eastern Mazovia with Warsaw, and also by the south-west of Lithuania. Russia annexed all the rest of Lithuania, and Austria, again taking her place among her friends, secured Little Poland and Cracow.

Thus these nefarious efforts appeared crowned

with success. The vultures were gorged with the body of the slain. A nation of old renown had been blotted from the map of Europe. Who could imagine a country emerging with any signs of life from a torture so exhausting and complete? But Poland throughout all her history has reminded Europe of the Phoenix. She is for ever escaping from the crushing bondage of a dead past.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEQUEL AT VIENNA

PARTITIONED Poland appeared to have lost her national life for ever. How could you more effectually destroy a country's sense of corporate unity than by dividing her territory into three distinct fragments? The predatory States who had consummated this ruin may well have supposed that their victim was delivered, bleeding and helpless, to be devoured exactly as they pleased. And there is no doubt that Poland would never have survived as a nation but for two main circumstances. The first, which has already been amply indicated in previous chapters, is that when the vultures descended on her, she had already a Constitution broadbased on the franchise of the many. The second, which now merits an effective share of our attention, is that her Final Partition took place in the stirring days of the French Revolution.

The times were indeed fateful for Europe. No national boundaries, however permanent and fixed, no national arrangements, however old and

venerable, could be looked on as beyond the reach of conquest and fate. Kings were made and unmade with incredible rapidity. The old foundations of the earth were loosed and shaken. It would have been impossible for Poland, tortured and forsaken as she seemed to be, to avoid participating in the fervour of all these world-wide movements of opinion and endeavour. Her people have ever shown themselves responsive to the spirit of the age. The country, which appeared to be parcelled amongst her most implacable foes, woke up again to some measure of independent strength.

It could hardly be expected that Polish patriots, with their strong desire and love for natural freedom, could contemplate unmoved this gathering of the dogs of war. Whatever else the French Revolution did, it certainly confronted Europe with the spectres of neglected nationalities. This was exactly what endeared and commended it to every true Polish heart. When the Italians formed a provisional Government in Lombardy, a Polish legion was taken into their service. When Napoleon was elected First Consul, a small but efficient Polish host fought in the name of freedom by his side.

It is difficult to estimate with really discriminating justice the value of Napoleon's encouragement of the revived aspirations of the Poles. That the soldier of the Revolution had been influenced

to some extent by the generous side of the revolutionary achievement was certain. That he had a personal sympathy for the Polish character and a deep-seated military respect for the Polish chivalry can scarcely be denied. But there was an absence in his character of the fixed and permanent and immutable, that firm and assured basis of conviction which remains like the lighthouse, unaffected and secure amid the most violent raging of the storm. His ideas and ambitions seemed to be renewed every morning. Every new concatenation of circumstances offered a fresh problem to be solved by a series of adroit combinations, which might bear little reference to the combinations of the day before.

Such a solution of the problem of his enigmatic personality continually forced itself on the attention of the Poles. There was never any reliance to be placed on the permanence of the conqueror's views as to her ultimate future. When the Emperor entered Posen after Jena, and was received by its inhabitants with the utmost enthusiasm, he only treated them to the hard reward of a proclamation which said much but meant very little. It is quite certain that on one occasion he offered Posen to Russia with a view, which was paramount in his mind at the time, of weakening Muscovite power, and that Alexander refused the proffered gift, because he feared the same result. Yet Napoleon owed a great deal

to the military help of devoted Polish soldiers, and it was only an exhibition of ordinary gratitude when he signed the Treaty of Tilsit with Russia and Prussia, and recognized the provinces of Posen and Warsaw as an independent State under the name of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.

The Poles took full advantage of this new opportunity for self-government. It has been pointed out in the preceding chapter that, during the revolution headed by Kosciuszko, their leaders definitely forswore the idea of a republic simply based on the franchise of a nobility. When again, at Warsaw, the successors of these older leaders recovered the power to realize in actual government the spontaneous ideas of their race, they reaffirmed and redeveloped this wider democratic Constitution. They abolished serfdom. They granted to the peasants the privileges of full citizenship. Education, as always when the Poles have the control of their own destinies, was one of the chief national services. Inspired by a responsible, self-governing, and withal an instructed people, they believed that Poland would have no cause to dread the deadliest of her foes.

This irresistible might of the free self-governing country was shown when Austria sent an army of subjugation against her in 1809. These Austrian legions, numerous and well appointed, were decisively defeated by Ponia-

towski, and the Poles occupied again the lost cities of Cracow and Lwow. Poland, in fact, might have again received a distinct place in Europe, if she had been content to steer her course by the maxims of Machiavellan diplomacy. But, just as in the case of the earlier alliance with Prussia, the Polish statesmen were too honest for their time. In those days, gratitude, though it might be an admirable virtue for the individual, was hardly looked on as binding on the larger arena of the life of the unitary State. Alliances were made and unmade as dynasties and self-aggrandizement might chance temporarily to dictate. Kings could repudiate their engagements as often as they changed their coats.

But Poland was like the ancient chevalier, without fear and without reproach. Her people never forgot those who had befriended them. When she pledged her word, she remained true and staunch to the pledges she had made, even when self-aggrandizement obviously urged her to choose another camp. Napoleon, with all his faults, had given her, in the Duchy of Warsaw, the new opportunity of an independent life. To Napoleon, then, this Bayard of the nations would attach herself, in success and even in failure. When the conqueror was passing to the darker days of his career, and had launched his ill-fated declaration of war against Russia in 1812, the Poles gave him the benefit of that military ex-

perience which they had won on many a stricken field. Poniatowski was a commanding figure in Napoleon's Russian campaign. Had his advice been followed, as it deserved to be, the campaign might not have been so disastrous for the failing conqueror as it ultimately became.

Poniatowski, in fact, counselled Napoleon not to penetrate into the heart of Russia, but to confine himself within the limits of Poland. His advice was not accepted. That overwhelming insolence which the gods send to ruin the plans of an intoxicated conqueror had laid hold of Napoleon at this crisis of his fate. He attempted the impossible in endeavouring to crush the Colossus beneath his iron heel, and as Poland clung to his cause with the finest perfection of loyalty, her territory and her future were both submitted to the decision of the diplomats who met together at the Congress of Vienna.

It is difficult to preserve a spirit of true historical patience when following closely the history of this Congress, during the few eventful months when the future of Poland was the favourite theme of hard-hearted diplomats. The nation chiefly concerned had no representatives at the historic gathering. It may be doubted whether she had a single sincere or reliable friend. A golden opportunity presented itself of undoing the evil effects of a divided Poland, as it had been dismembered in the three Partitions. The exigen-

cies of the war had placed under the control of Russia almost nine-tenths of the original territory of the country, before the vultures swooped down and rended it. The Duchy of Warsaw, which had been originally parcelled out between Austria and Prussia, was now entirely in Russian hands. Why should the territory of the tortured nation again be divided? Would not the interests of Europe be best served by keeping the Poles together?

It might have been expected that this aspect of the Polish problem would approve itself to the minds of the representative of Great Britain at this memorable Congress. There has ever been a secret consciousness, in the inmost heart of the people of these islands, that the cause of Poland is the cause of that selfsame liberty for which this country has so often suffered and bled. It was only four years after the final act of the Congress that Shelley wrote his "Prometheus Unbound"—which may be understood as an inspiring anticipation of the deliverance of Poland. The intolerable agony of Prometheus is there described in music that moves and in words that burn. But this unmerited agony is only the prelude of a great democratic triumph. Prometheus will be restored and revived. Demogorgon, the power no longer of destruction but of love, invokes all the forces of natural and spiritual life to listen to his song.

That was the aspiration, but what had been the achievement? Lord Castlereagh, who represented a people of free and generous instincts at the Congress of Vienna, was hardly a fair exponent of their sympathy and power. He had received instructions from Lord Liverpool which hardly allowed him to carry protests to the verge of war. He did once or twice, in a platonic way, suggest that an arrangement for giving Poland her old domain, with a full measure of legislative independence, would be most acceptable to the British people. But he never appeared to estimate at its proper value the importance, in any case, of restoring to Poland her territorial integrity. To him the districts occupied by Russia were simply a matter of barter. If the Tsar would give up territory, he would make concessions as to independence; and if the Tsar wanted suzerain rights, he must be content to yield up to his predatory neighbours some of the land he had so lately acquired.

In fact, it was the Tsar Alexander, rather than Prince Metternich or Lord Castlereagh, who was the "cynosure of every eye." He was the man in possession. His armies had overrun the Duchy. His life was a fasciculus of contradictions. He could write to his special envoys of the possibility of a plan for making Governments incapable of acting "save in the greatest interests of their subjects," but whenever you suggested democratic

devices for securing this ideal, Alexander was off again in full cry on the high horse of autocracy. His tutor had induced him to read Rousseau in his youth, and he could second with the most extravagant and sentimental warmth the laudation of liberty and equality. He had even an idea in his mind of the importance for Europe of a reunited Poland. His Foreign Minister, the Pole Adam Czartoryski, had induced him to believe in the policy proposed in a different form by Napoleon at Tilsit—the plan of reconstructing Poland, either by crowning the Tsar himself as King, or by putting one of the Grand Dukes on the Polish throne.

Unfortunately, however, the Tsar Alexander was a sentimentalist. He saw the good and approved of it, but too often he followed the bad. His idea of independence did not imply that a nation was to be free from every vestige of external control, to follow the course of her own aspirations and destiny. He had never analysed his conceptions closely enough to be in danger of such an anti-autocratic result. He beheld a vision of a Poland with her lost territories found again, but he did not think the vision worth the life of a single Cossack soldier. He even made the reservation that the country to whom as a gracious gift, he allowed autonomy should be enlightened and far-sighted enough to accept the tutelage of those to whom God had gifted place and power.

Among all the great States, in fact, which took part in the Congress at Vienna, there was not the slightest vestige of a disinterested attachment. Not one of them felt so profoundly attached to any of the others that it would espouse the cause of its neighbour through good and through evil report. The only guiding thought that the best of them could carry into the actual Congress was the mechanical conception of the Balance of Power. Europe must be for the future in a state of equilibrium. No Power must be made so strong that it could overweigh its neighbour. Ambitious States must be prevented from interfering with the scales of destiny, and an elaborate series of checks and counter-checks must be devised for keeping Europe from the dread of future revolution and change.

In all this sorry huckstering there was no thought of taking the opinion of the people most profoundly affected. Poland, as we have seen, had no representatives in the Council Chamber. Saxony had to see her dearest interests a subject of barter between Hardenberg, Metternich, and Castlereagh. From the first it was plain that the Tsar Alexander did not intend to withdraw his troops from the main body of his conquests. He was willing—in fact, he ultimately demonstrated his willingness—to resign Saxony to the King of Prussia, but the Duchy of Warsaw he had acquired by the mercy of Providence, and of

the Duchy of Warsaw he could only say, "This land is mine." He undoubtedly started, as has been already discerned, with the notion of a reunited Poland, but he never rid himself of the hallucination that a reunited Poland could only survive in the comity of nations if she were possessed and administered by him for his own use and behoof.

Such autocratic doctrines could hardly be rendered reconcilable with the Balance of Power, as that conception was understood by Austria, France, and Great Britain. Was it not a menace to Europe that the Colossus should thrust his advanced guard right into the heart of the European system? The King of Prussia, who was really most deeply affected, was not so hostile to the spirit of Alexander, and he easily succumbed to the Tsar's superior fascination and magnetism. But it was evident to the rest that a Russia in possession of Warsaw would be a nearer neighbour to the great Western Powers than the great Western Powers particularly desired.

Thereupon the representatives of Britain and Austria, with the ultimate help of Talleyrand, began to intrigue against Russia. The game waxed fast and furious. Lord Castlereagh tried to bring over Prussia to his side by the bribe of Saxony, but the Tsar could draw off his brother monarch whenever he chose to exert his personal

powers, and besides, it was soon apparent that Austria did not really desire to give Prussia so much additional territory, in such near proximity to her own frontier. So the intrigues for fresh rearrangements of territory continued through many eventful months, barred only by a *coup d'état*, when the Tsar evacuated Saxony and had himself proclaimed at Warsaw as King of Poland.

By this time the negotiations had resulted in certain of the diplomatists holding fast to certain strips of land. Prussia was only to get a third of Saxony, but to soothe her injured feelings she was presented with Posen and with those cities of Dantzic and Thorn which, as we have seen, had played such an important part in the previous evolution of Poland. Galicia was restored to Austria. Cracow, with its surrounding district, was constituted an independent republic. Russia retained Lithuania and the other Slav provinces of the old Kingdom of Poland ; while the Duchy of Warsaw was placed under her suzerainty, with the promise of autonomous institutions and with words inserted in the final Act which pointed to the possibility one day of the recession of the Duchy of Lithuania.

It must not be thought, however, that these arrangements were accepted in any generous spirit of mutual forbearance and sympathy. Now one State and then another repented of its bargain just when that bargain appeared about to be

universally accepted. In fact, it was the news that Napoleon had escaped from Elba that brought the huckstering to a final conclusion and again divided up Poland among the three great predatory Powers.

Thus ended Poland past, and thus was Poland present introduced, in a maimed and fractured condition, on the great and conspicuous stage of modern history. Her mighty river, the Vistula, was controlled by three different States ; and as for their liberties in the future, the Poles had only the barren assurance of the final Act of the Congress that "they should obtain a representation and natural Constitution regulated according to the degree of political consideration that each Government to which they belong shall judge expedient and proper to give them."

How much and how little this assurance meant will be shown in Book Second of this historical discussion. That it is possible to write a history of Poland present is itself a proof of the irrepressible vitality of this remarkable Slavonic race. It might have been expected that "Finis" would have been added to its history when its territories were rent asunder, and its people forced, in the event of a general war, to fight in so many different camps. As a matter of fact, Poland has triumphed even when assailed by the very hardest blows of time and fate. Since 1815 she has continued to feel the force, and respond to the

influences, which, in other nations, have changed the face of Europe ; and her sons have never lost that regard for individual liberty and tolerance, which has descended to Poland from the experience of Poland past.

BOOK SECOND
THE PRESENT

See a disenchanted nation
Springs like day from desolation ;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate.

SHELLEY.

CHAPTER I

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

POLAND was left at the end of Book First in an apparently hopeless condition. Her once famous soldiers were compelled by the hard exigencies of time and fate to divide themselves up under the command of three great military States. The unity of her national life appeared irrevocably to be surrendered. In any ordinary circumstances it would be permissible to conclude that the country had ceased to have her own distinct history as a separate aggregate of national thought and endeavour.

But not so in the case of this remarkable product of Slavonic energy and persistency. Misfortune served only to weld her people more completely together in their common pursuit of democratic liberty and progress. Their sundered territory was only an impulse and an incitement to make the bounds of their freedom wider yet. As a matter of fact, Poland has never had more conspicuously a history than during the nineteenth and since the beginning of the twentieth century.

The last shreds of oligarchic exclusiveness have been banished from the thoughts of her nobility. The land and the people stand before us as advance guards of those ultimate constitutional developments which are yet to renovate the map of Europe. All the great revolutionary movements of the future, in national thought and life, have found their echoes among her leaders. All the democratic movements of the present are appealing to the hearts of her people.

What is the situation of the land and what is the character of the people who have manifested so distinct a national vitality? It has always been evident, from the settlement on Lake Goplo onwards in the history of Poland's past, that the country lay on the main lines of European communication. The history of Europe has had many chapters written since then, and many States that were at that time in the forefront of the march of civilization have now ceased to trouble. But the Near East, which was formerly a centre of economic energy, has now again appeared in the limelight of the infinitely more complex world of to-day! Are there not many circumstances which qualify Poland to play a great and important part in the comity of nations?

For one thing, it cannot be looked upon as a minor State in territory or population. As a matter of fact, the historic Poland comprised an area of over 280,000 square miles, and was

greater in extent than any of the other big European States except Russia. Only about two-fifths of this wide area, as can be discerned from the accompanying ethnographical map, is inhabited by a compact mass of Poles, and therefore belongs to Poland on a rigid application of the principle of nationalities. But even so the ethnographical Poland is a stretch of territory by no means to be despised. It is very little smaller than Italy or Austria without Hungary, and it is equal to one-half of the German Empire. The Kingdom of Poland, in the main part of which the numerical supremacy of the Poles is overwhelming, comprises in itself alone an area of 49,000 square miles.

It is this Kingdom of Poland, submitted after 1815 to the rule of Russia, which is usually understood in popular acceptation to-day when mention is made of the name of Poland. To the east of this kingdom stretch those territories belonging to the ancient Polish Republic, which Russia absorbed in the period of the partitions, and which now are divided into nine Ruthenian and Lithuanian governments. The population is of heterogeneous origin, though the Poles, as will be seen from the map, constitute a more or less decisive element of their peoples. In 1913 the south-eastern part of the kingdom was withdrawn from the administration of the Governor-General of Warsaw, and formed just before the

war a separate department, which was called the government of Kholm.

As soon as this administrative change was made, it was followed by further regulations which were designed to weaken Polish influence in the dismembered province. It is impossible, however, to change the character of a nation either by Act of Parliament or by administrative order, and despite all the efforts of the Russian bureaucracy in the past the Poles still wield a very considerable influence in all these Lithuanian and Ruthenian districts. It is quite certain that in any reconstituted ethnographical Poland of the future the Lithuanians and Ruthenians in the districts so included will have every reason to repose confidence in the democratic intentions of the Poles.

The southern part of the kingdom is bounded by Galicia, and to the west of Galicia there extends the Austrian Silesia, of which a portion, the Duchy of Cieszyn (Teschen on the map), is without doubt an integral part of Poland. One ought also to reckon as Polish the ancient captaincy of Spiz, which is now a division of Hungary, but which formed part of Poland until the days of the First Partition. Even up to the present day the hardy mountaineers who inhabit it are still of Polish origin.

Silesia proper is under the rule of Prussia, and it, too, is a country of the Poles. As will be seen from the map, however, it is not regarded

as a part of ethnographical Poland, for part of it has long since been Germanized, or rather Prussianized.¹ Still more distinctive, and less accessible to the effort to stamp out the Polish national character are the Grand Duchy of Posen to the north of Silesia, and farther north still, towards the sea, Royal or West Prussia, in some districts of which 55 per cent. of the population are Polish. In Ducal or Eastern Prussia the Polish population is massed in the department of Olsztym (Allenstein on the map) and in the ancient Ermland. Both these districts will be remembered in connection with the fierce trials of strength between Poland and the Teutonic Knights, which occupied such a conspicuous place in the earlier chapters of the Book First of the history.

As Poland is divided up into three great States, its administrative arrangements vary according to the specific State with which it is connected. The kingdom, for example, was divided by Russia into ten seats of government, whereas in Prussian Poland there are five provinces: those of Silesia, Posen, Eastern and Western Prussia and Pomerania. Each of these provinces is again divided

¹ This Germanization is mostly in the big towns. In the districts outside these towns there has been of late years a great renaissance of national feeling and this is likely to increase as the years go on. An important fact is that Silesia returns a majority of members to the German Reichstag.

into smaller units for local government corresponding roughly to our county and our urban district. In Austrian Poland Galicia forms one administrative unit and Silesia another, while the Polish district of Hungary—not very great in extent—has to be content with four small urban divisions for local purposes.

Poland, as we have seen from its past history, has always been distinguished for its local government. In fact, it was because the democratic and freedom-loving instincts of its citizens revolted against the administrative despotism of the unitary State, that it became such an object of suspicion to the centralized and predatory States which eventually divided it up amongst themselves. Everywhere throughout the length and breadth of its partitioned territories are to be seen its self-governing communes, some large and some small, some insignificant villages and other great and flourishing towns.

On two sides Poland is limited by natural frontiers, the Carpathians on the south and the Baltic Sea on the north. Neither on the east nor on the west, however, is an enemy held back by any such formidable boundaries. Between these two points of the compass the country mostly forms an undulating plain 300 to 450 feet above the sea, connecting the lowlands of Brandenburg with the great plain of central Russia. As we have seen from the history of Poland past, this

open position made it, from the very earliest time, the battle-ground of contending armies. From the east great Asiatic swarms overflowed its wide tracts of sand, marshes, and peat bogs; while on the west first the Teutonic Knights and then Prussia, their lineal successor, constituted themselves veritable thorns in the Polish side. It would have been an evil day for Great Britain had she lain similarly exposed to the inevitable attacks of her foes.

Poland, then, is a country of plains and plateaux, which merge in the south with the frowning spurs of the Carpathians. As the mountains get nearer the plateaux get higher, and they are then covered with forests of oak, beech, and lime. The scenery is also grander and more imposing. In the country round the Carpathians there are many silvery lakes and unexpected prospects of magnificent Alpine scenery. In the north there are also lakes, but they are more like great marshes in a flat land where the streams lazily meander from one marsh to another. One of these—Lake Goplo—has already been mentioned as the traditional home of the race.

As can easily be understood, the rivers follow the slope of the country, and they also pass from south to north. The greatest and most important of the Polish rivers is the Vistula, which takes its rise in Austrian Silesia, not far from the village of Wisla, and bears on its banks the two most

important towns of Poland—Warsaw and Cracow. It divides the hilly tract in the south of the kingdom into two parts, the Lublin heights on the east and the Sandomierz or central heights on the west. Before it finally loses itself in the Baltic, it has made its way through all the three divisions of Poland, and thus may be said, in spite of all the partitions which have split up the country's territory, to stand continually as the symbol of the unity of her national existence.

From very remote times, as has already been pointed out, the Vistula has continued to be the biggest commercial route in Poland. It is well served by important tributaries, such as the San and the Bug, with the Narew on the right side and the Pilica and the Bzura on the left. In this way it connects itself with the greater part of ethnographical Poland; while, by means of its canals which connect it with the Dnieper and the Oder, it extends its waterways into the heart of Germany and Russia.

Next in importance after the Vistula is the River Niemen, which is connected with the greater river by the canal of Augustow. This river separates the Kingdom of Poland from Lithuania and passes through Eastern Prussia before it too finally loses itself in the Baltic.

Looking, even in the most cursory fashion, at the ethnographical map, it is easy to see in what a wide space of territory the Poles are in an

overwhelming majority and where they are distinctly, but in varying proportions, mixed with other nationalities. So far as the latter are concerned, they are mostly Lithuanians, Ruthenians, and Jews, and they continue to subsist side by side with the Poles until the line of the Dnieper is crossed. In the Kingdom of Poland itself there is one part—the district of Suwalki—where the Lithuanians are in a majority, and another part—the district of Kholm—where the Ruthenians are in a majority.

Altogether twenty-four millions of people dwell in those parts where the Poles are in a majority. Of these, eighteen millions, or 75 per cent. of the whole, are entirely Polish. The remaining 25 per cent. comprise two and a half million Jews; who thus constitute a very important part of the population of the country. A very large number of Germans are, of course, to be found in Posen and West Prussia by reason of the policy of forcible colonization pursued by the German Government. They are, however, much more sparsely represented in the other parts of Poland. A similar general observation may be made in other districts of the Jews, who comprise no less than 14 per cent. of the population of the kingdom, while in Posen they have not more than 1 per cent. to their credit.

Another very remarkable feature of the ethno-

graphical situation is the fact that the Polish landowners have an overwhelming majority in districts where the Poles constitute a very small minority of the total population. This is especially the case in the Ruthenian district of Podolia, bordering on Bessarabia, where, as the map shows, the Poles number 7 per cent. of the population while the Polish landowners possess 53 per cent. of the total amount of land ; in Volhynia where the numbers are 12 per cent. of the population and 46 per cent. of the land ; and in the district to the south-west of Kiev, where the numbers are 2 per cent. and 41 per cent. respectively.

In religion the great majority of Poles are Roman Catholics, but part of these Roman Catholics belong to the Uniates, who combine the doctrines of Roman Catholicism with the ritual services of the Greek Church. The significance of this movement has already been discussed in the chapter on the "Freedom of Faith" in the previous part of this history, while it is also there shown that Poland's difference from Russia in the matter of religion has always imparted to her sympathies a particularly Western turn.

The most cursory survey of the geographical features of Poland reveals the fact that on the east and west the land has no natural frontiers. Its people could not defend themselves behind great mountain barriers. It was continually

dependent for its safety on the valour and military capacity of its trusted sons. And yet Poland was never affected with the modern disease of militarism. No less a witness can be cited to the truth of this statement than Count von Moltke, the founder of the late military greatness of Germany. "When the example of her neighbours," says the renowned Field-Marshal, "forced Poland to establish a standing army, it was not placed under the immediate control of the King. He appointed a royal Field-Marshal for Poland and one for Lithuania, but he could not deprive them of office. A definite portion of the revenue was not set aside for the support of the army, but subsidies were voted by each diet."

Yet this very circumstance, that even in military affairs the ultimate control was in the hands of the citizens acting through their elected representatives, introduces us at once to the main cause of the irrepressible vitality of Poland. Opposed to each other and almost at the extreme poles of constitutional development stand the predatory State and the self-governing nation. In the predatory State all power and authority vests in the governing bureaucrat or autocrat above. In the self-governing nation all the ultimate initiative can be traced to the general will of the citizens beneath. The governor of the State distrusts all combinations which may oppose their combined desire to the great categorical imperative of the

Lord's anointed ruler. The self-governing nation thrives on combination, and wherever its people live they associate themselves together in all kinds of free and voluntary movements for the attainment of their designs.

So it was with the Poles when their modern history begins with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and thus their national life could never end in death or unconsciousness, even amid all the trials and tortures of their partitioned existence. The Polish Question was not only raised again but it remained the thorniest problem of all European politics. Wherever Polish citizens went they were bound to make their influence felt. They would fight for freedom in Italy. They would inspire great popular demonstrations in Great Britain. They would embarrass Lamartine and his provisional government in 1848. They would tax the power of Russia even when only able to continue the veriest guerilla battle. Wherever Poles were found there they were certain to associate themselves in the common pursuit of liberty and freedom.

Poland has continued great because she is rooted in the past and her branches reach out for light and warmth to the rays of the rising sun. When Chopin was composing the great A-flat Polonaise he is said to have fled in terror from the haunting vision of his ancestors in their clanking armour. The capital of the kingdom,

Warsaw, which occupies almost the centre of the ethnographic area, is not simply a place of big factories and small workshops. It is also the arena of most that is characteristic in the moral, intellectual, and political development of the Polish race, and it bears on the outside of its old library the verisimilitude of all the ancient Polish kings.

Who can avoid feeling profoundly that Poland is and must remain a nation, as he passes through the venerable streets of one of her world-famous cities? Cracow, for example, the ancient capital, is still a mausoleum of many of her most cherished national memories. In the years before the war it profited by the fact that Warsaw lived under a strict rule of administrative repression, and the young Poles had to go there to complete their studies and to be taught the Polish tongue. There they can find a university that goes back more than five hundred years to the days of the Jagellonian kings. There they can find the sole Polish academy of sciences which reunites the Polish savants from every part of the ancient republic.

At Cracow, splendidly situated on the top of the Wavel Hill, there may still be seen, restored to some appearance of its former splendour by public subscription, the old castle of the Kings of Poland. In its cathedral most of these same monarchs are buried; and there, also, as in

some national Valhalla, lie the ashes of one who inspired, more than most, the Polish national movement in the nineteenth century—her greatest and much-loved poet, Mickiewicz.

Amid such sights and scenes as these who could doubt or despair of a people's national future? Even such towns as Posen manage to protect the relics of Polish individuality against an encroaching flood of Germanism. The architecture and monuments of Dantzic are still to a very large extent Polish, though its population now includes a majority of Germans. Vilna, in spite of every kind of Russian administrative interference, remains a great Polish centre and its people are proud of the fact that Adam Mickiewicz studied in its university. Lwow can never forget that it is the seat of the sole Polish legislative assembly in the world that existed before the war—the Diet of self-governing Galicia.

A country is more than a geographical expression. The ties that bind its people are more lasting than those of common language or blood relationship. The people of the same nation have common hopes and fears. They are bound together by the administrative constraint of a united national mission. You may grind them down beneath the iron heel of the spoiler. You may divide their cherished possessions among the hosts of their bitter adversaries. But the nation

itself you cannot divide. It suffers the armies of its enemy to go riding amongst its towns and villages. Then it plunges again into the reverie from which one day it will reawake in reinvigorated strength and vitality.

CHAPTER II

TILLERS OF THE SOIL

POLAND'S main industry is agriculture. Amid all the chances and changes of modern economic life the land stands immutable and secure as the fundamental source of her prosperity. About 70 per cent. of her people devote their energies to this primitive occupation. Formerly they produced such large quantities of wheat that they not only satisfied their own needs, but they exported a large amount to foreign lands through their great waterway of the Vistula.

Happy are the people who have not entirely forsaken the natural life of the country for the artificial life of the great modern city! The peasant is a constant observer of the great operations of Nature as he performs his yearly round through all the changing seasons. He can watch Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades. Old customs, which have been rudely shaken off by the more sceptical dweller in the towns, still assert their hold on his life, and remind him that the present is only a continuation of a vaster and more aboriginal past.

There can be no doubt that the Polish peasant will be one of the assets of Europe in the days when Poland recovers her hold over her own destinies. In a world of disillusionment he has retained much of the hope and more of the fervour of his primitive faith. He likes his shining top-boots and his silver-bedecked waist-coats, and whenever his sympathies are aroused he is staunch till death to the cause he has willingly espoused. "Most of the cottages," says a writer in the *Fortnightly Review* of a village he has visited, "have a quaint, gaily-coloured pattern painted round their entrances, and about one in every three displays earthenware pots of geraniums on the window-sills, a roughly outlined—in red or blue chalk—hand on the door, and clumps of rue in the tiny fenced-in garden—all indicating that a daughter of the house is ready for marriage. There is here none of the squalor and misery so frequently noticeable in other Polish districts. Near by, flocks of fat geese, important and loquacious, browse serenely in the company of black, curly-haired, portly pigs, and hobnob with the children who cluster round the village pond, weaving, as beauty-loving Slavs are wont to do, wreaths of wild-flowers in their tousled hair."

It has been sufficiently shown from the history of Poland past that Poland present can safely be trusted with the future of her tillers of the soil.

There was a time during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries when the condition of the Polish peasant was bad, just as the condition of the Russian peasant was a very great deal worse. But, as has been already abundantly made plain, there were, during the most unfortunate periods of these good old times, many compensating, or at any rate alleviating, circumstances.

Most important of all, there was ever in the heart of the Polish nobility an invincible tradition of freedom. It has already been remarked that in the middle of the eighteenth century a number of gentlemen farmers, of their own individual initiative, put reforms into practice on their lands. They reduced the working obligations of their peasants, they increased the number of their communal rights, they gave them security of tenure and a certain amount of sickness insurance. All this is unheeded by many of the chroniclers of Polish history because it is not written formally in the statute-book in the shape of a change of laws, but there can be no doubt that it has to be kept steadily in remembrance if we are to form any accurate estimate of the governing ideas of the Polish nobility.

Who constituted this Polish nobility? No narrow oligarchy or exclusive class, as every reader of the history of Polish past knows only full well. After the defence of Vienna all the

cavalry of John Sobieski were ennobled. There was never in Poland that great gulf fixed between the classes which made Disraeli, in his "Sybil," speak of lord and tenant as inhabitants of "two nations." In the course of his peregrinations a Polish noble at an obscure farm stading may sometimes come on a figure bent and bowed, as in a picture of Millet, by his daily work in the fields; and yet when he addresses the stooping figure, with the ordinary greetings usual between noble and peasant, he gets no immediate response. The man only continues doggedly and persistently to pursue his avocations.

Let the seigneur, however, change his vocabulary! Let him address the toiler in the fields as "Monsieur, mon frère," and immediately his salutation is returned as from equal to equal. The tired, toil-laden worker retains all these rights and privileges of nobility, which come to him from an ancestor ennobled for valour on the stricken field. Whole villages were sometimes ennobled for this very cause in the many wars of the Republic; thus there could be no insuperable barrier erected between one class and another.

To-day the Polish noble is certainly prepared to continue the history of Poland present in harmony with the best traditions of freedom and fraternity. How can he do otherwise? He is no absentee landlord, but one who lives among the

people and sympathizes with their every aspiration and endeavour. "All days are filled with work," says the same observer who has been already quoted, "but with the Szlachta, or nobility, as with the peasantry, Saturday is the busiest. At five this morning the silver samovar was hissing and the rye-bread and honey were laid in the landowner's dining-room, and five-thirty found the master, his wife, and daughters at their daily tasks. Where is the luxury, thriftlessness, and degeneracy so universally attributed to the Polish nobility? Amongst the ancient aristocratic circles it may be met with, but not amongst the Szlachta. Almost everything in this household is of home growth and manufacture—wine, cordials, smoked hams, pickles, bread, jams, bottled fruit, cheese, butter, preserved vegetables, homespun linen and wool, clothing, embroidery, bedding, and carved furniture. Servants swarm—the women bare-legged to the knee and brightly clothed, the men in livery, with the crest of the house engraved on their shining silver buttons—and, if weak and irresponsible, they are faithful and affectionate friends rather than servitors to their employers. They never complain, and give of their best, because, like the peasantry, they find their masters human beings, such as themselves, whom they may address at ease, whom at all times they may greet in a tone of cheerful equality. The footman talks at table and offers

entrées or cigarettes with the air of a grandee. The maids imitate the dress or appearance of the ladies when handing round coffee in the saloon, remarking perhaps to a visitor, 'Oh, what a pretty colour is the noble madam's hat! It becomes her admirably; it pleases me greatly!'"

There was no name which stood out more prominently in Europe at the beginning of the history of Poland present than did that of Kosciuszko, and Kosciuszko revived the democratic aspirations of later-day Poland with all the authority of his own glorious individuality. He did not, as we have already seen, suppress forced labour entirely, or render up to the peasantry the fullest rights of freedom. But he certainly made a magnificent stride in this direction by allowing the tillers of the soil the liberty of going where they would and by giving them a perpetuity of their right to the land.

It is grossly unfair to judge Poland by the descriptions of memoir-writers of the eighteenth century, just as it would be unjust to saddle the democratic France of to-day with those terrible chapters in which Saint Simon has described the peasants, huddled together upon straw or flying from the presence of the tax-gatherer, during what was called the brilliant reign of Louis Quatorze. You cannot, either in Poland or in any other European nation, expect the nineteenth century in the eighteenth, or put the new

economic wine into older bottles. One statement can be made, however, and made with the most absolute certainty, and that is that Poland present has commenced her history with the underlying desire to do justice to the tiller of the soil, and that all throughout the nineteenth century, shackled as she has been, she has continued responsive to these great world movements, which have gone in the direction of greater justice and freedom to the poor and the oppressed.

In 1807 the Constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw abolished serfdom and proclaimed equality of all before the law. On the eve of the war of 1812 the Lithuanian nobility submitted to Alexander I a proposal to give liberty to the peasants in ten years. The Tsar was not prepared to go so far as either of these proposals, and under the stern discouragements of his bureaucracy they simply became the reveries of a vanished past. Yet this tradition of commercial freedom remained a permanent possession of Poland's movement of revolt. The insurgents of 1830 proposed to begin by a distribution of the national estates among the peasants. So did those who were concerned with him in the rising of 1846. The later movement of 1863 had leaders some of whom had gained inspiration from the teaching of Mazzini, and it was with no uncertain voice that they proclaimed the enfranchisement of the tillers of the soil.

Besides, were there not many old customs, prevalent in ethnographical Poland before the war, which could not fail to remind the peasants that they were not as dumb, driven cattle, to be forced any day hither and thither as the caprice of the proprietor might dictate? Up to our own modern days, when the harvest was over it was the custom of the tillers of the soil to congregate before the manor-house of the squire and not to be satisfied until the squire himself and his wife came out to listen to their performance. Then each of them began to sing an improvised effusion, in which he touched, sometimes in very satirical fashion, on most of the events that attended the gathering-in of the sheaves. In such Fescennine flow of soul the people naturally said exactly what they thought. They never spared the feelings of the squire, if it were desirable that his feelings should not be spared. Yet on either side it was meant in good part, and it was everywhere received with the greatest good humour. Cannot the Poles be trusted to oil the wheel of State when again it passes into their hands?

The landed proprietors of modern Poland, if we except the State domains and the possessions of the communes, can be divided into those of the large and the small proprietors. There are very few who possess holdings of medium size. Such may be found in the district of Suwalki or among

the peasants of Western Poland, but in general a strong and flourishing middle class has never been a characteristic of the historic Polish State. The tendency still is for the big proprietor to disappear and for the small proprietors to occupy a larger share of the land. Twenty-five years ago big and small proprietors pretty nearly accounted for the same extent of agricultural land. To-day the small proprietors make use of about twice as much land as do their bigger neighbours.

For many reasons this breaking-up of the big properties is the most significant feature in the wide swelling plains of the Polish countryside in the nation of to-day. In Galicia and the kingdom it goes on freely under the stress of economic needs. But in Posen and Western Prussia it is part of the policy which Prussianism adopts in order to exterminate or render helpless the Polish race. A Committee of Colonization was instituted in 1886 and furnished with sufficient funds by the Prussian Diet to buy up big Polish proprietors and to sell the lands as small allotments to Germans, who would thus keep them permanently out of the hands of the Poles. At the same time, German agricultural banks were founded to facilitate the division and to ensure that sufficient money was advanced to cover any necessary expenditure by the German emigrants.

It is difficult, however, to crush the national

life of Poland. A country which has held her own through so many of the vicissitudes of history has thereby shown itself to be an owner of the elixir of life. A unitary State may behold the people crushed and dispossessed. They have been accustomed to see their organization controlled by the bureaucrats above, and they have neither the will nor the capacity for effective combination. But not so Poland. The legislation of Prussia only stirred in her people the desire to unite together economically for the overthrow of their enemies. They founded a bank. They united together in a remarkable network of voluntary societies. In this way they hoped to get the land divided among small Polish proprietors before the Prussian Committee could acquire it for their own use and behoof.

Thereupon ensued a duel to the death between the freedom-loving Poles and the bureaucratic magnates of Prussia. A move on one side was followed by a counter-move on the other, and the contest was still going on when the Great European War was suddenly precipitated. It had even reached an interesting and significant culmination. A new legislative measure had been carried through the Prussian Diet to hamper as much as possible the operations of the Polish Committee. The latter could, as before, acquire land for allotment, but no building could be erected on such land without the consent of the

Prussian authorities. In this way it appeared that the Poles were to be baffled at every point. The German officials took care to give no easy or willing consent, and it became impossible for the peasants to work any fresh allotment unless it were adjacent to their previous holding or required the erection of no fresh buildings.

Still, however, Prussianism was not yet finished. It had fresh terrors in reserve. A sweeping Law of Expropriation was voted in 1908 and applied for the first time in 1913. Polish proprietors were rudely seized by the mailed fists of the State official, and their former patrimony, acquired at a Government valuation, was parcelled out amongst colonists of German blood. As if to make assurance doubly certain, and to secure that the Polish race should be scientifically evicted from Posen and Western Prussia for ever, it was even proposed before the war to give the Prussian State the first option on any properties to be sold in the Polish districts for the future. By this sweeping measure all free sale of land would have been forbidden. No private purchaser could make an offer until the property had been refused by the State.

Notwithstanding, however, all the terrors of his legal and military system, the Prussian bureaucrat felt that it would be hard to overcome the national spirit of Poland. This is how the events of the last few years were recently described in

the *National Zeitung*: "Irresistibly, like a Juggernaut car, the Slavonic element rolls onward; step by step it conquers the towns and villages of the Prussian East . . . a quiet, noiseless, political, and social conquest of these regions. . . . Wherever the place of a lawyer or of a chemist is free the Pole steps into it; wherever a piece of land in town or country is for sale Polish money is offered for it, and this money streams into the country from secret sources which seem to be simply inexhaustible. The Pole stays, the German goes: that is the wretched Polish Question in a nutshell." So concludes the German journalist, but the conclusion is more sweeping even than his. It is the old contest between freedom and autocracy, the hard and sustained battle in which at length the nation triumphs over its hereditary foe.

Russia has never equalled Prussia in the scientific ruthlessness of her operations against the Poles, but—albeit at a great interval—she has tried to get Polish land into the hands of small Russian proprietors. After the revolutions of 1830 and 1863, where, as has already been pointed out, agrarian considerations played a substantial part in the proclamations of the revolutionists, the confiscated lands were handed over to Russian dignitaries on the understanding that they should only be bequeathed to heirs of real Russian blood. In that way about 3 per cent.

of the total lands of the kingdom were alienated from Polish hands. In addition, some of the lands which the Russians had expropriated from the Polish Church were sold to Muscovites at a price below their real value.

Again, however, the tenacious national life of Poland proved itself more enduring at last. The Russian proprietors disdained to make any continuous stay on their lands. They had no sympathy with the Polish character. A visit to their Polish estates seemed nothing more nor less than a choice of voluntary exile. If their lands were not to be idle, they were in fact compelled to rent them out to Polish farmers; and, recognizing that they had been beaten, the Russian Government bowed to the inevitable and a few years ago passed a law by which the advent of the small Polish farmer was outwardly recognized. No absentee Russian landowner could rival for a moment in influence the Polish proprietor, who lives among the people and personally directs the farming of his own estate.

It is the peasant or small proprietor, as has already been sufficiently shown, who constitutes the backbone of the Polish nation. He is sober, thrifty, industrious. There is fire and passion in his soul. He imbibes far less alcohol than his compeers of either Russia or Prussia; and whenever the people get any administrative power in their country they use it to place in his hands

more extended educational facilities. Who can doubt that when the country comes to its own these peasants may be trusted to give a good account of themselves in the comity of nations?

In addition to the small farmers, there are, of course, a number of agricultural labourers who sell their services to the highest bidder. It is they and not the small-holders who furnish the factory workers for the towns which, in latter days, have increased so much in modern Poland. It is they who form the staple of that vast army of Polish emigrants which overflows into Germany, and which never gains its ultimate goal until at length it has come to a pause in the United States of America.¹ Needless to say, as befits a country with such an intense national life, there is a strong tradition in Poland of progress in agricultural affairs. The movement is hampered because the country is under the yoke of unitary States, and in Posen and the kingdom the authorities have no love for self-governing combinations. There are Agricultural High Schools or Colleges at Warsaw, at Pulawy, at Cracow, and at Dublany, but in general the Polish youthful agriculturists have to complete their education abroad.

¹ Of course a certain number of the emigrants into Germany are simply seasonal emigrants. They pass the frontier to take part in seasonal harvest operations in Germany and Denmark and they return again to their Polish homes.

Primary and secondary schools of agriculture are, however, very numerous, and there is no mistaking the influence which they have exercised on the moral and intellectual level of the Polish peasants, as well as on the general course of agricultural progress. When it is remembered that schools of cookery and household management have recently been added for the young women, it will be recognized that the Polish measure of progress is complete.

It is interesting to examine the general organization and hierarchy of these different agricultural unions so common and useful in Poland. Prevented, by the hard exigencies of fate, from realizing its distinctive national spirit in its own governmental institutions and laws, the genius of the country has found some measure of outlet for its irrepressible life in these noteworthy agricultural societies.

First of all there is the parish society, which comprises all the small proprietors of a single parish or commune. Secondly, there are the societies of a bigger district or county, composed of large proprietors and also of delegates from the parish union. Finally, the societies from every part of the country form the general federation, which is known by the name of the Central Society of Agriculture. Federations of this third order have their seat at Warsaw, Cracow, Lwow, and Posen.

The activities of these agricultural associations are of the most varied character. They organize exhibitions, they maintain laboratories and model farms, they engage lecturers, they publish magazines, and in general they co-operate in every way to keep the nation abreast of the latest movements and most recent discoveries in agriculture.

Co-operatives work along with these self-governing bodies in order to sell their products and buy in large quantities their raw materials or machinery. Altogether, this network of agricultural organization plays a much greater part in the life of Poland than it would do in the case of a nation which has complete control of its own destinies. The agricultural society serves to bring the men of governmental talents together in an effort to manage a limited section of their own affairs, and it is all the more valued on this account.

Arable land in the kingdom occupies about 56 per cent. of the whole extent of the country. In Galicia it occupies 48 per cent., and in Posen 62 per cent. Every year fresh land is brought under cultivation, and Poland becomes more important as a source of agricultural supply. In 1820 the arable land, the garden land, and the building land only constituted 33 per cent. of the whole country. Just before the war the amount had increased, so that it leapt up to the higher percentage of 60. The forest land decreased

from 30 to 18 per cent. Pasture land and uncultivated land had diminished at the same time from 30 to 13 per cent.

The effect of all this undeniable economic progress in the oldest of all industries will be more closely investigated in the course of the next chapter. Meantime, it is important to observe how all the facts combine to show the adaptability and capability of the country for a full measure of independent self-government and life. The Polish tillers of the soil have literally made the desert to blossom as the rose. Living sometimes far apart from one another in these great plains, fringed here and there by a dark belt of mysterious forest, they yet contrive to keep in close touch with their neighbours all around, and now and then burst in on them in a troop to pay a surprise visit and to discuss all those subjects affecting the country's future which are so dear to a Polish heart. Their industry is untiring. They have redeemed more land from the waste than the people of the adjacent Germany. And when the day's work is over, and the workers of other lands would spend the evening in torpor and idleness, the young men and maidens find relief for their beauty-loving and passionate souls in that dance which, first in the eyes of all Europe, revealed the artistic capabilities of Poland.

CHAPTER III

THE LURE OF THE TOWNS

POLAND has already experienced the lure of the towns. Many of the vexed questions which are perplexing and transforming life in other countries have some time since commenced to trouble her people. Modern civilization in the more recent aspects of its energetic life, has now been completely naturalized in this old historic land.

The fact is that the country has not failed to feel the force of the changes which have caused the nineteenth century to become known to the men of the twentieth as the "wonderful century." As has already been seen, there are several big towns in Poland, but those which were mentioned in a previous chapter owed their position to being, at an earlier date, in the main lines of communication between East and West. It can hardly therefore be said that they are a product of these more recent movements which have caused the great countries of the West to consist mainly of dwellers in the city—men and women who live

far remote from the more pleasant and natural life of the fields and hedgerows.

In addition to these historic towns, however, there are a number of other places whose history has been more recent, and which, undoubtedly, owe their position to the great industrial revolution. There is, for instance, Lodz and its neighbourhood, including the towns of Pabianice, Zgierz, Tomaszow, and some districts of the government of Kalisz, where the textile trades have their centre ; the towns in the Dombrowa basin, from which the manufacturing districts are supplied with cheap fuel ; Sosnowice, with its coal and chemical industries ; and the new towns in the petroleum area of Galicia. All such towns are examples of large and flourishing communities which have literally sprung up in the night.

It is a most conspicuous proof of the national separateness of Poland that, though now partitioned between three great States, it has contrived to impart an entirely Polish character to these newest towns in Germany, Russia, and Austria. The Prussian towns are, in general, the best administered. Throughout Russian Poland there are no elective municipalities, and no mayor who is responsible to the mass of the inhabitants. The behests of a central and irresponsible bureaucracy lie, like a heavy frost, on those who would, otherwise, be the free and responsible burgesses of flourishing cities of commerce.

In addition to these towns, which are a product of comparatively recent times, there are some of the old historic cities or towns which are gaining additional population and importance through the development of modern industry. A conspicuous example is the capital city of Warsaw itself, which has become the seat of engineering works and spirit refineries. A still more conspicuous example is Czenstochowa, which, formerly the seat of a shrine to which pious pilgrims wended their way to satisfy their instinct for unseen realities, has now become a seat of the iron industry and an emporium for the manufacture of toys.

It cannot, indeed, be asserted that Poland is yet what she might be in matters industrial. In this field of social life, as has been recognized in England and Scotland since the days of Adam Smith, the utmost possible measure of initiative and freedom is needed for a full and advantageous development. It is true that, in the days of war, the State may control the supply of sugar and lay its hands on the administration of the railways. It may even constitute a National Register for a summary history of its inhabitants, so that the supply of men and women for war and munitions may be systematically stimulated and adjusted. But that is because war is a time of reversion rather than of progressive expansion and achievement. It is the day of administrative reaction

rather than the hour for the proclamation of a new freedom. When the war is over, society will begin to construct itself on new lines, and it will then be found that trade and commerce can only attain their best results when they are not unduly hampered by the bureaucratic control of the State.

Poland, however, remains submitted to three different administrative authorities, and each of them uses it frankly to subserve the interests of its own particular economic expansion. The Vistula crosses these different economic frontiers ; and it is perfectly certain that, if disunited Poland again became united, and was able to view the industrial problem in her own way and with the desire to benefit to the utmost possible degree her own country and people, she would address herself to the present-day situation on very different lines.

Take, for example, this story of the lure of towns in Russian Poland, and the relation of the Russian Government to the resulting movement of the population. It can easily be understood that it would never be the final policy of the Russian administration to encourage a too rapid development of Polish manufactures. Centuries of civilization of a Western type have made the Pole apt for economic activity on a modern scale, while Russia, with many important industrial developments in different parts of her Empire,

may take a much longer time universally to adapt herself to the new movements.

So far as the last century was concerned the Poles have made most progress industrially when they were freest from bureaucratic control. The beginning of the modern industry, in fact, dates from their first opportunity of a more independent life as the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. It was an epoch of unexpected economic activity. German artisans were invited to settle in the country and they were given many privileges in order to induce them to make an extended stay. Even when the final Act of the Congress of Vienna again made Russian predominance a disturbing influence, there was a considerable period when, under leaders and directors who recognized its extreme importance, the trade of Poland increased from more to more. In 1828 there was founded the National Bank of Poland. Factories and mines were started under the direct auspices of the Government. When private individuals manifested the desire to exploit the mining resources of the country, they received the utmost encouragement and facilities on the part of the administration. Even the revolution of 1830, though it caused a great economic crisis, was unable wholly to arrest the growth of Polish commerce and industry.

The Russian authorities were now thoroughly alarmed, and in 1831 a tariff imposed heavy duties on Polish goods. In 1834 a further step

was taken, and the Poles were totally prevented from exporting their goods to Asia. It might have been expected that, under the stress of action so stringent on the part of the predominant Power, the course of Polish economic development would at once be hopelessly stayed. How could the smaller State stand up against the Colossus? At once the exports of cloth to Russia had fallen from £300,000 to £85,000 in value. Yet, after the first shock, Poland showed that she was quite able to control the course of her own destinies in matters economic. The Bank of Poland, pursuing a liberal and enlightened policy, provided capital to build factories and railways, and, thanks to this brilliant initiative, the country successfully weathered its stormy season of crisis.

It was just at this time that a great wave of Free Trade enthusiasm passed over the length and breadth of Germany. A Zollverein was the result in the States which were soon to form a great Central Empire, and by the action of that Law of Imitation expounded in such a seductive way by the great French sociologist, M. Tarde, the spirit, of which that Zollverein supplied the evidence, was also manifest in Russia. The Russian bureaucrats recognized the magnificent results of the German Tariff Union, not only in the extent to which it freed industry from its chains, but in the way in which it welded Germany together into a fresh and formidable

whole. They tried to introduce the same system into their own country, and in 1850 another great stimulus was given to Polish industry by the fact that all internal tariff walls were abolished.

The year 1850 is undoubtedly a great and significant year for the industrial history of Poland. Before that year steam power was generally unknown in the textile trade ; but after that year the new machine industry arose in its strength, and new manufacturing towns sprung up, like mushrooms, in the shortest space of time. Many causes contributed to aid the rapidity of this result. There was first the fact that the blockade of the Russian coast during the Crimean War, while it cut off the supply of cotton to Russia, did not prevent Poland from having a supply of the needed raw material by land. Then there was, secondly, the additional fact that railways had been introduced and the export trade to the East stimulated and increased. Thirdly, there was that notable law of 1864 which has already been mentioned in the last chapter. So far as industry was concerned it freed the peasants from their connection with the land, and thus produced a new supply of labour fresh to the manufacturer's hand.

After 1877 a fresh influence supervened and brought industry in Russian Poland to the point of development at which we find it to-day. The Russian treasury was empty, and in their desire to

replenish it with the greatest possible speed the Government fell back on Protection as a fiscal resource. There can be no doubt of the stimulus that Protection at once gave to the development of the Polish infant industries. Dr. Rosa Luxemburg, who has attained fresh notoriety among German Socialists since the beginning of the war, and is herself a native of Poland, has calculated that of the total number of factories existing in 1881, 18·5 per cent. were established before 1850, 37·2 per cent. between 1850 and 1877, and 44 per cent., or nearly half the total number, between 1877 and 1886. It is easy to pass from the consideration of statistical abstracts like this to the further and plausible deduction that the Polish economic fortune is inseparably bound up with that of Russia; and that, if she were sundered from the realms of the Tsar and the bigger country chose to impose a new and stringent tariff against her, she would forfeit all the economic prosperity which she has subsequently attained.

Before, however, any such deduction is too hastily made, it is well to remember some undoubted features in the economic situation of the Kingdom of Poland just before the war. There are now no internal tariff walls between Russia and Poland, it is true, and yet in other ways, and in the ostensible interest of her own economic future, Russia has already taken care

to perpetuate what is virtually a species of Protection to her own industries with the object, latent or avowed, of preventing Poland from ever becoming the workshop of Russia. Railway freights have been manipulated in such a manner as to give preference to goods going from Russia to Poland as compared with those going from Poland to Russia. It cost as much, just before the outbreak of the war, to bring goods from Lodz to Warsaw as it did to bring goods from Moscow to Warsaw. Surely this was to impose a heavy premium on the development of the Polish export trade, and when the difficulties placed by the law on the flotation of a fresh Polish limited company, and many other police regulations which obstruct the course of industry are kept fully in mind, it can hardly be thought that an independent Poland could have greater and more awkward obstacles to surmount.

One has only to glance at the relative statistics to see that, before the war, the economic policy of the Empire had helped Russian industry to grow and compete effectively with that of Poland. In other words, Poland was more important industrially to Russia than Russia could possibly be to Poland. In the total balance of trade between the two countries, Poland, counting taxes and everything, pays to Russia a total value of £3,000,000 as excess of imports over exports. There is a constant decrease in the consumption

of Polish manufactured goods in the bigger country. Taking the average for three years of cotton and wool together, we get the following results :—

	Total Production per annum.	Export to Russia.
1900-1902 ...	4,459,000 pounds	3,724,000 pounds
1908-1910 ...	5,552,000 „	4,051,000 „

In the first of these triennial periods, that is to say, the Russian consumption of Polish goods was 83·5 per cent. of the total Polish production; but, in the later triennial period, this proportion had fallen to 72·9 per cent.¹

In the years from 1900 to 1910 there has been a rise of 1 per cent. per annum in the export of Polish cotton and woollen goods to Russia; but during that same ten years the imports of the same kind of goods from Russia have risen 3·7 per cent. per annum. Here are some details of Poland's most recent commercial expansion, which show the rate of development of her most important industries :—

	1876.	1896.	1912
Cotton	£1,994,860	£4,941,221	£15,307,937
Wool	898,582	5,358,558	8,822,645
Textiles generally	2,286,363	11,217,657	28,030,385
Coal	152,991	950,000	—
Iron	1,025,794	6,423,568	11,489,687

¹ M. Stanislaw Posner ("Poland as an Independent Economic Unit," p. 12) points out that the Polish ironworks deal with a great quantity of iron ore from Southern Russia. In 1909, 1,228,500 tons of iron ore were extracted and 4,258,800 smelted.

Or, instead of value, let us take the quantity of coal and iron for five more recent years, and let us see how it works out in thousands of pounds¹ :—

	1908.	1909.	1910.	1911.	1912.
Coal	344,260	337,675	340,790	360,400	392,900
Iron and steel	17,325	17,191	20,490	22,619	24,637

It might seem as if such statistics as these speak more eloquently than words. Polish production, so far as coal, iron, steel, and the textiles generally are concerned, has gone up in the kingdom by leaps and bounds. Would it not be infinitely better, so it has been argued, to retain these benefits of Russian protection which have enabled it to attain such wonderful results?

But what, in sober reality, is the real interpretation of these results?

The great proportion of the trade, which has apparently developed so rapidly, is in the hands of German *entrepreneurs* who have established branch factories in Poland, just over the frontier, with the object of tapping the rich Eastern market without the intervention and impediment of heavy customs duties. These foreigners have not established their industries at Lodz because they have any great love for Poland, or because they imagine that Poland has any surpassing material advantages for their trade. They simply select Poland as the nearest part of the frontier,

¹ The poud equals 36·11 English pounds. The figures for iron and steel do not include pig iron.

and if a tariff wall were established between Poland and Russia they would surely erect fresh branch factories on the nearest part of the Russian frontier.

As a matter of fact, any such German movement will probably find itself forestalled by Russia after the Great European War. Most of these very German factories have been destroyed in the course of the combat, or where they have not been destroyed they have been transferred by the Russian Government itself to some point more in the interior of Russia. This statement is certainly true so far as the textiles are concerned; but even as regards iron and steel, which may be supposed to be affected by the close proximity of the coal-fields of Silesia and Dombrowa, the Russian protectors themselves point out that in the Ural regions of that country there is an inexhaustible supply of coal and ore. All this points to the conclusion that Russia is determined, whether Poland is still connected with her politically or not, to take measures to ensure that her own infant industries shall grow and be endowed with every advantage which may enable them to compete even more effectively with those of Poland.

Speaking of the part played by the Germans in complicating the economic prospect, we are reminded of the immense influence exerted by the very large number of Jews in Poland. It

has already been pointed out, in Book First, that Poland suffered from the absence of a middle class in her midst, and the tendency of modern economic investigation is to emphasize more and more the importance of the part played by the Jews in this connection.

The most brilliant investigator in this particular field of thought comes from the ranks of the Germans themselves. Professor Werner Sombart, in a well-known work, points out that by the end of the fifteenth century the trade of the Mediterranean was superseded by oceanic trade, and the centre of the world's economic gravitation was shifted from Southern to Western Europe. What was the cause of this epoch-making change? Various reasons are assigned in the current histories, but Professor Sombart has come to the conclusion that one of the most potent influences that affected a nation's economic prosperity and decline was its toleration or persecution of the Jews. Thus Spain and Portugal visibly declined, in an economic sense, after the expulsion of 300,000 Jews (1492-7). In the sixteenth century also we are presented with the spectacle of the economic downfall of a number of German and Italian States, following closely on the expulsion of the Jews from their midst. On the other hand, the great economic development of Holland closely followed the arrival of the Jews. In England economic progress can be connected with

the presence of Spanish and Portuguese Jews. It was the Jews who connected North and South America, and gave plausibility to the plans for developing the North American Colonies. It was the Jews who established the Stock Exchange and put forward Free Trade. The great capitalistic undertakings of the seventeenth century were mostly based on Jewish capital. Had the wealthy Jews left Spain a great deal earlier than they actually did, very likely there would have been no expedition of Columbus and no Spanish discovery of the New World.

Poland, so far as she has had any direct influence on her own destinies, has ever been tolerant and sympathetic in her treatment of the Jews. They can be traced in the country so far back as the ninth century, and in subsequent years some of the ablest of the Polish kings gave them guarantees for the free profession of their religion. About the beginning of the sixteenth century there came a Jewish immigration from Germany, and the immigrants settled in groups in the small towns, taking into their hands practically all the commerce of the country.

If, then, as Professor Sombart has shown, the Jews played such a part in these economic convulsions which have now constituted of Western Europe a civilization of big cities, it is certain that Poland owes something to her hospitable welcome of the strangers. The last occasion on

which a Polish administrator in Russian Poland was allowed to have any place or power—during the ministry of the Marquis Wielspolski in 1861—full religious tolerance was granted to the Jewish faith, and every Jew might become a Polish citizen if he could only read and write in Polish. Poland was known in the Jewish writings of the time as a “new Palestine.” Cracow was called “New Jerusalem.” Jews enrolled in the legions organized by the Poles in the army of Napoleon, and in 1863 they maintained a sympathetic attitude to the Polish insurrection of that particular year.

No wonder, then, that at the present day we have a huge aggregation of Jews massed together within the ethnographical borders of Poland. So far as Russian Poland is concerned, this was helped not only by the former toleration of the Poles, but by the policy of the Russian Government, which forced out Jews from other districts of the Empire and made them crowd to the towns and complicated the coming problem of urban aggregation. The Jews constitute an actual majority of Siedlce, Suwalki, and Lublin—three towns in Poland with a population of over 20,000! Out of 38 towns, with a population of 10,000 to 20,000, the Jews have an actual majority in 16. Out of 73 towns with a population of less than 10,000 the Jews have an actual majority in 54. Statistics like these are suffi-

cient to show the overwhelming influence economically of the Jewish problem in Poland.

All this meant a keen commercial and industrial competition between Jews and Poles. The latter had no career open to them in governmental service. They were not given free employment on the national railways, or in the many public works supervised by the Russian officials. Many of them were leaving the land under the stress of economic necessities, and they all—Poles and Jews together—flocked into the towns and overflowed there into every kind of available employment. It is easy to foretell to what unfortunate results this keen commercial competition was bound to lead. Wages must be depressed. The conditions of life were inevitably worsened. A census made in Warsaw in 1912 revealed the following scale of wages amongst the Jewish workmen :—

20%	whose weekly wages were under 10s.
35%	between 10s. and 12s.
24%	20s. and 30s.
8%	above 30s.

What an unfortunate result of the lure of the towns ! Fifty-five per cent. of the Jewish population of the capital city with a weekly wage below 12s. And only 8 per cent. with an income of over 30s. a week. All the investigations made in our own country by Booth and Rowntree are dwarfed by such a comparison.

In later years the feeling between the Jews and the Poles has been to some extent embittered by a fresh influx of Russian Jews into the country, forced thither by a more severe and uncompromising policy on the part of the Russian Government. These first arrivals were not exclusively of the class that crowded into the most congested areas of the towns, and immensely complicated the conditions of life in the slum districts to be frequently discovered there. Many of them were commercial men with a big Russian connection, and this Russian connection they were extremely anxious to keep and to develop. When they commenced to start fresh commercial enterprises in Poland they were forced into an attitude of antagonism to Polish aspirations and hopes. If Poland becomes independent, so at heart some of them appeared to argue, she may erect a big tariff wall between ourselves and Russia. It is then our interest to oppose Polish independence and to prevent the erection of such an insuperable tariff wall.

It is perfectly certain, however, that if Poland is left to herself she will manage to assimilate and satisfy the Jews, just as they have been assimilated and satisfied in all the progressive countries of the West. The economic problem here is inevitably bound up with the political, and if the latter presents no barriers in the path, economic adjustments will soon follow in order

to give the free Poland of the near future the benefit of all that Jewish enterprise and commercial and industrial activity which, as Sombart has shown, have benefited so much the leading nations of Europe.

In any case her friends are entitled to consider the change which would be produced in Poland's economic outlook by the reunion of all her sun-dered fragments. Unpartitioned Poland is a country strong enough in population and resources to withstand assaults, whether political or economic. In 1908 her reserve of coal was estimated at 110,000,000,000 tons.¹ The seams are 327 yards thick, and can be worked to a depth of 185 yards. But at the present time this big field of coal is divided up between three hostile States, each of which exploits it in a different manner. The reserve of iron in the kingdom is valued at £1,000,000,000. Posen has few coal-mines and practically no metals, but her agriculture would make her people able to buy the industrial products from other parts of their common country. Professor Faber has calculated that petrol-bearing land in Galicia extends for a distance of 19,760 acres, and contains at least

¹ For the instructive figures in this paragraph I am again indebted to the careful work of M. Stanislaw Posner. M. Georges Bienaimé ("La Pologne Economique," p. 14) points out that the presence in Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Siberia of numerous Poles is a guarantee for an extended market.

470,000 tons of raw petrol. This is not only a source of great wealth, but might yet serve as a base for important manufacturing activity. In fact, the possibilities of material advance in Poland are endless were only the people masters of their own destinies, and were only one part of the divided realm able to supplement the economic deficiencies of the other. Industries for the production of soap, glass, perfumes, and pharmaceutical requirements could be set up in Galicia, where salt, petrol, coal, and wood are so plentiful. In the Tatra Mountains, with their numerous waterfalls, power might be supplied for an industry similar to that in the north of Italy.

Yet the sober reality is this, that these economic resources have not yet been adequately utilized. A good many petroleum mines are being worked, it is true, but these are not owned by Poles, and their exploiters therefore sell the oil and take the proceeds to their own country, without seeking to encourage the use of the new source of power as the basis for fresh industrial activity.

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? The lure of the towns, as we have seen, has chiefly affected Russian Poland, and there it has shown itself in an aggregation of a typical West European proletariat and in a highly developed industry which is exporting goods to China, Persia, and Asia Minor. Whether Poland is still connected politically with Russia or not,

it is certain that the latter country will make gigantic efforts to encroach on her trade and to secure that the destroyed or transported Polish factories will be permanently opened for the future in some place within her own undoubted boundaries. On the other hand, Russian Poland would greatly gain by recovering her old connection with Posen and Galicia and thus reaping the benefit of a more widely extended home market. The Bank of Poland would organize finance so as to fully develop the economic resources of the country. The Duchy of Posen would offer an exclusive market for a large selection of finished articles. This would stimulate the manufactures of Galicia, the slow growth of which is mainly caused by their lack of a sufficient market. The home market of a united Poland, in fact, would be ample compensation for any preliminary friction caused by the erection of Russian tariff walls—and, in any case, after the facts given in the earlier part of the discussion, it is certain that these walls could neither be high nor impassable. Everywhere there would be needed a progressive spirit of adaptation and ingenuity, but the Poles have always shown that they would find neither menacing nor impossible the new problems of a really independent economic life.

CHAPTER IV

VISIONS OF THE SPRINGTIDE

POETRY and the fine arts show, as conclusively as any other part of the national life, that there are still the materials for history in the progress of Poland. Had the pulses of the people ceased to beat when their territory was parcelled out among the autocrats of Vienna, had "Finis Poloniæ," falsely attributed to Kosciuszko, really been written on their tombstone, then we might indeed have expected a literature, but a literature melancholy, pathetic and romantic, a literature harping for ever on the fact that the days that have once been are now no more for ever.

This is the characteristic note of the literature of defeated nations, the haunting melancholy which Matthew Arnold hears as the dominating ground-tone of Macpherson's "Ossian," the striking birthmark of the Celt, and, it well might be supposed, the heritage of Poland in her day of sorrow and distress. "Yet a few years and the blast of the desert comes, it howls in thy empty court and whistles round thy half-worn shield.

Let the blast of the desert come ! We shall be renowned in our day ! ”

It cannot be denied that in the great poets of Poland in the earlier part of the nineteenth century—Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Krasinski—we find distinct traces of what George Brandes has called the Hamlet type, combined indeed with the sorrows of Werther and the rebellion of Byron, but still giving to the whole the aspect of a tortured soul kicking against the pricks. Yet in Mickiewicz and Slowacki, at any rate, this was only a single phase of their career, and summing up the whole lesson of their life-work, it cannot be said that there is any final accent of hopelessness in the literature which has come from Polish poets, or in the figures which fill the canvas of Polish painters in the nineteenth century. There may be many suggestions of melancholy in a Mazurka of Chopin, but then it must be remembered that Chopin on his father's side was of purely French blood. The final Act of the Congress of Vienna, which appeared for the time irretrievably to put an end to the separate political existence of Poland, only made more intense, democratic, and practical, the administrative instinct of the man of affairs, and caused the man of letters to detect more plainly the coming of the springtide.

Let us consider for a moment the difficulties under which the artist worked in his pursuit of

ideal perfection. In Russian Poland his work might be forbidden. The national language must not be encouraged. All instruction in the schools had to be conducted in the official tongue. In Prussian Poland the campaign against the usages which his heart held dear had been carried on with a scientific ruthlessness which has never been excelled. Only in Galicia before the war was there any semblance of artistic liberty, and there seemed little to encourage the writers of Galicia to hope for the dawning of a new or a better day.

Yet all the time the arts were cultivated and the men who listened for the coming of the springtide experienced the force of all these movements in art and in life which constitute the vital inspiration of modern evolution and progress. Music and the dance—the eldest of the arts—have ever been a notable part of the popular life of Poland. The earlier pieces of the Polish Paderewski—admittedly one of the greatest players of his time—consisted of graceful and attractive dances which were reminiscent of his native province, Podolia, and of the neighbouring districts. Schools of the Fine Arts exist at Cracow and at Warsaw. The first has the title of Academy, and it is looked upon as standing upon the same level as the Universities. For a long time it had as its director the greatest of the Polish painters, Jan Matejko, whose historical

delineations have justly earned the encomiums of the greatest European critics. The Warsaw school is more recent than that of Cracow, and naturally owes its endowment to private generosity. But nothing could damp the ardour of the Polish artists. Baffled often in the effort to find opportunities in their own country, they might be found before the war hard at work in the studios of Munich, Paris, and Rome.

There is withal something characteristically sane about these productions—not the unbalanced intensity of a defeated race. Take, for example, the four leading works of Matejko himself “The Prussians bringing Tribute,” “The Battle of Grünwald,” “Sobieski before Vienna,” and “The Sermon of Skarga.” Had the painter of these great masterpieces held in his heart the unmixed consciousness of despair, he would simply have made them the record of a passionate admiration of the past, the sorrowful sense of a greatness that had once been acknowledged by the power of the Teutons, but which now had suffered the untimely fate of Prometheus.

Instead of giving way to saddened reminiscence, Matejko took the utmost pains to be historically accurate. He spent weeks and months on the effort to catch the correct lights and shades in the character of a single countenance. Sometimes about two hundred figures crowd his canvas, and yet there is about each of them such a direct

sense of individuality, that they can be reproduced as correct historical portraits, apart from their setting and environment in the main picture.

This is not the pathetic restlessness and haste of a people caught in the meshes of revolution, and hopelessly struggling with the evil fortunes of their own destinies. It is rather the strong methodical perception of reserved power which comes to a nation which has never lost control of the nerve centres of history, and which is determined calmly, patiently, and yet persistently to work out the fortunes of its own historical future.

The same confident sense of belief in the present promise and in the future prospects of the life of Poland is conspicuously evident in the best work of Mickiewicz, the greatest of all her literary figures and influences. Had Mickiewicz been seeking for a subject for his great epic "Pan Tadeusz" in the records of a nation which had ceased to have a history, he would have gone back to the past, he would, like the Prussian historians, have extolled the deeds of the Jagellonian monarchs in Poland's glorious day, or he would have fondly dwelt on the memorials of that later manifestation of life when John Sobieski came to the relief of Vienna. Instead of attempting any of these tasks, he was content to draw inspiration from the history of Poland in the nineteenth century. He wrote "Pan

Tadeusz," which is no record of aboriginal conditions, but a picture of Lithuanian and Polish life at the time of Napoleon's invasion in 1812.

How far, truly, has Mickiewicz progressed beyond the Romanticism which is never at home except in some state of society and life very different from that which the writer sees around him? Scott may find his subject in the hero of some forgotten border foray; Milton may go back to the prenatal history of the whole created world; but Mickiewicz will manifest a new sense of wonder as he explores the mysterious depths of a Lithuanian forest. He can behold his ideal in the real. He can see in faded glories the signs of a refulgent resurrection. Poland has a promise and a potentiality which will yet be freely displayed amid all the oppressions and disappointments of her later historical life.

There are many characteristic episodes in "Pan Tadeusz," which show this side of the modern Polish poet better than any mere descriptions can do. In one of these pen pictures of the epic the Count meets Sophia in the garden of the castle and makes to her a speech in the courtly style of the polonaise, reminiscent of the old-time romance of the distressed damsel rescued from duress by her brave and knightly admirer. In reply, the maiden can only look at him in a puzzled kind of manner. She did not understand a single word of all these fine perfumed

speeches. Hers was the life which we have already seen working itself out in the present-day history of Poland, that life of the farmhouse and the cottage which will yet reclaim for the nation the possession of her lost destinies. Sophia had no notion of masquerading as a lovelorn damsel. She counted it her highest privilege—prosaic though it might appear—to make the most of the poultry and cabbages entrusted to her charge.

No wonder that Mickiewicz, in the minds of the Poles of his own day and ours, was more than a fine artist who opened his ears to the call of the springtide. He was also a practical patriot who could give inspiration and impetus to the man of action in the stress of deadly peril; for it is said that on the breast of Polish soldiers slain in the Russo-Japanese War on the plains of Manchuria the "Book of the Pilgrims" of the great national poet was found preserved and cherished as a precious "guide, philosopher, and friend."

It was because Mickiewicz ever realized that Poland was still writing her history that he spent the later years of his life in political propaganda. In this part of his life he has been compared with Milton, but his prose pamphlets on political science, and his new aspirations for the resurrection of Poland, were more fitting to be the daily food of the Polish reformers than was that

organ music which, even in prose, came sometimes so magnificently from the older poet, fitted to be a source of practical inspiration to the Puritans of his own tumultuous day.

But it is not that these who hear the call of the springtide in Poland are simply disinclined to reconstruct the vanished past, or are content to dream of the well-nigh forgotten days which may never again return. Modern art in Poland has its eye fixed on a much more ambitious flight. It has kept in touch with all those movements which have made up, in the story of other independent nations, the history of the nineteenth century. Its painters see inspiration in the peasant of to-day. Its great musicians like Paderewski can write a "Polish Fantasy" whose slow movement might tempt to hopeless melancholy, but whose every theme and rhythm is suggestive of that silver lining which can be discovered behind the darkest clouds.

After the revolution of 1863 there was first a positivist school, of which Prus and Swistochowski were the acknowledged leaders. These men were not satisfied with the romantic reveries on revolt which might have been expected to remain as the aftermath of a rebellion. They directed the attention of the younger generation to the necessity of laying deeper the foundations of a new and national edifice. They urged the people not to flee from the soil consecrated by

the travail of their fathers. Poland, they ever insisted, is even now working towards the fruition of her own destinies. Her future is sure and certain. It only requires that those who love her best should continue to work hard and methodically in the patience of belief and hope.

Just as the scientific movement produced Zola in France, so in Poland it produced Zeromski and Reymont. Only in the latter the sometimes painful realism is combined with a genuine poetic feeling which showed no such deep basis of pessimism as we find in the Rougon-Macquart series, though not so definitely in the more romantic novels of Zola's later life. Reymont believed in Poland, and he would have been crushed and disheartened by the poignant appeal of his own realism had he heard the constant cry "*Finis Poloniæ*" resounding for ever in his ear.

But a much more characteristic movement of the latter part of the nineteenth century—no less than the modern Labour movement—finds expression in a notable work by Wyspianski, the Polish poet who died at Cracow in 1907. It has already been pointed out that in Galicia alone, out of the three parts of partitioned Poland, was there before the war any semblance of artistic liberty, and it was therefore fitting that the new note should be struck where the Poles had still

freedom to warble their woodnotes wild. When Wyspianski died, it was apparent that his teaching and life work had made a deep impression on the minds of his fellow-countrymen. No honours were deemed too great by the municipality of Cracow to signalize her sense of the greatness of her illustrious dead. His children are being educated at the expense of the municipality. In this lost poet the people of the old Polish town hailed a prophet of the modern life.

The difficulties in the way of any Labour movement in Poland are, of course, great, and in some parts, before the war, apparently insurmountable. In Russia the public authorities frowned at every effort of the workers to organize. There must be no unions or associations of any kind to which the worker could owe allegiance except the one great encompassing administration of the State. Since 1907—when a reaction was definitely victorious—all trade unions have been suppressed. Combinations of workers were strictly forbidden to represent the cause of their fellows or to investigate and endeavour to remedy the conditions of daily toil.

Technical education is not well organized either in Prussian Poland or in Galicia, and it hardly exists at all in the regions under the control of Russia. The Poles themselves, as will be shown in a later chapter, are doing what they can at their own cost, and with the means open

to them, to remedy some of the defects, but the Government will hardly make a single move to make such instruction more complete and efficient. Everything must be left to the generosity and enlightenment of high-minded and wealthy Poles.

Yet Wyspianski, although he could not, like Anatole France, aspire to a place in the ranks of Labour, did not despair of a future for the workers' movement in Poland. He knew the tillers of the soil, and he had experienced the lure of the towns. He beheld the beginnings of what might prove a great Labour movement, working out its way to a destined goal, and to embody all these feelings which surged up strongly and purely in his heart, he wrote "The Wedding" and "The Resurrection."

"The Wedding" tells the story of a union between a noble and a peasant girl. It opens with a *motif* drawn from the old folklore of the past. There is a fancy in some districts of England that if a young girl looks at Christmas in a glass she will see there plainly the lineaments of the young man she is hereafter destined to marry. In Poland it is the wedding evening which is the time of mystery when the ancient spirits are wont to revisit the scenes of earth. Call to the plants as you behold them shrouded outside the room in their coverings of straw, and they will unexpectedly respond to your call

by moving as living figures to the very spot of ground where you stand.

In Wyspianski's "Wedding" these ancient ghosts are evoked, and they prove to be a long and stately array of all the heroic figures who have made up the glorious past of Poland. Each of these figures passes before the reader to tell his own particular tale, but at the end there comes on the scene the prophet Wernychora to dispel all these ancient and romantic dreams. He addresses the peasants present at the wedding as guests. He summons them to be up and doing. He believes that they can now win freedom for their country by the force of their own right arm. It is a fateful moment. The whole future of Poland is at stake. How will the tillers of the soil respond to the invitation to win the independence of their own fatherland?

Alas! There is small hope to be found in the demeanour of these peasant guests! Some are tired. Others find the present too pleasant to desire aught from a shadowy future. All of them remain unmoved by the prophet's stirring call. The hope of the future must be found elsewhere, and so the poet turns from "The Wedding" to write his continuation drama of "The Resurrection."

"The Resurrection" is the manifestation of Wyspianski's unconquerable belief in the historic

promise of Poland. Even the greatest figures of the historic past in "The Wedding" had no complete solution for the needs and difficulties of the present. Only the present can solve its own problems, and Wyspianski introduces Mickiewicz and others to signalize his belief that the foundations of the more permanent Poland of the future are being well and truly laid, amid all the doubts and discouragements of the present, by those who, like the great national poet and his compeers, have heard in science, literature, and art the resonant call of the springtide.

The latest deliverers of Poland—the Polish working men of the future—are reserved by Wyspianski for the crowning culmination of his notable drama. This Labour movement is destined to be the hope of Poland. Crushed, repressed, oft-times silenced and cast down, it will yet be its country's pride and show to an astonished Europe that the good cause is never hopelessly defeated or lost.

In many of his characteristics Wyspianski reminds us of the young Georgian poets who are doing so much for the literature and art of our own Western land. There is the same varied and oft-times apparently irregular form, there is the same rich variety of metrical effects and experiments, and there is the same ever-present belief in the greatness of the people's cause. That

such a truly modern note should be struck in a country split up among powerful partitioning States is a clear and decisive indication that the pulse of the tortured nation has never truly ceased to beat.

CHAPTER VI

A POLITICAL RESURRECTION

THERE could be no doubt about the unhappy political condition of Poland when the twentieth century began. Her territory, as we have seen, was parcelled up among three different States. Her sons knew to their sorrow that, if any great war broke out between any two of these occupying Powers, they should find themselves impressed as conscripts to fight on different sides in two distinct contending armies. Such a fate is deplorable enough for any men who have been brought together in any kind of friendly relations ; but when Poland's uninterrupted consciousness of her national integrity is taken into account, the clear and penetrating sense in her sons that they are children of a common mother, then the unhappy fate becomes a cruel and almost unbearable tragedy.

There was everything in the daily life of Poland before the war to deepen and intensify the feeling of revolt against such an unfortunate position. Let us study, for example, the daily

administration in the Kingdom, or Russian part of the submerged nationality. There we have an instance of a country, deprived of its name. The Tsar of Russia has borne the title of King of Poland since 1815, but when the present Tsar sends a ukase to his kingdom, he simply calls it "the region of the Vistula." The Polish provinces, ever since the establishment of a Duma, have had very little chance of affecting the main lines of Russian policy. Since 1907, that is to say, since the dissolution of the second Duma, their representation has been reduced, and these thirteen millions of people are only allowed to have twelve representatives, elected on a complicated and unsatisfactory franchise, to the legislative assembly of Russia.

Far other is the measure of representation allowed to the Russian bureaucracy in the country. At Warsaw 850,000 Poles and Jews have only a single representative; but 30,000 Russians, mostly officials, are allowed to have one deputy who shall especially represent their own particular interests. At Kholm the members of the Orthodox Greek Church, numbering 358,000 in all, have two votes, one for a deputy who represents the whole population, including the 465,000 Polish Catholics, the other for a deputy who represents their own particular minority alone.

No wonder then that with the scales thus

heavily weighted, the influence of the central bureaucracy at Petrograd was everywhere apparent before the war in the political life of the country. (Russian Poland was an instance of a land consistently administered from above.) The resident Governor-General, who was also the head of the military administration, carried the usages of martial law into every department of his work.

There was always a skilful and elaborate hierarchy of officials to ensure that the man at the head should immediately be able to lay his hand on any part of the political machine. The country was divided in the first place into ten provinces, each of them presided over by a Russian governor. Then each of these provinces was divided into counties or districts, and each of these counties had its own special bureaucrat. It was only when we came down to the rural communes, that we had even the pretence at any kind of popular election. The head of the commune, the Woyt or Mayor, was, indeed, elected by the resident landed proprietors, but, owing to the extremely centralized character of the whole superior administration before the war, he could not long maintain himself against the influences of the higher officials who controlled and directed his energies on every side.

In the towns and cities, however, there was not even the semblance of this kind of autonomy.

The Mayor of Lodz and the President or Mayor of Warsaw were alike State officials named by the Government of Petrograd and responsible to the Government of Petrograd alone.

How could such an anomalous state of affairs tend in the direction of either economy or efficiency? The roads remained in a bad condition, as the contending armies have quite recently discovered to their great discomfort and cost. There is a sad lack of those State services which in other Western lands have done so much to succour the poor and the unfortunate toilers of the field. Were it not for the public-spirited generosity of the wealthier Poles who, in the past, have given cheerfully of their private fortunes to improve the condition of their poor fellow-countrymen, the position of the latter would be very much worse than it really is to-day. The Charity Organization Society of Warsaw, which is one of those voluntary societies in which the Poles have conspicuously manifested their great talents for organization and administration, has been in existence for a century, and, before the war, it handled every year the handsome sum of £600,000.

No juries were permitted in Poland before the war. That was the main distinction between the administration of justice in Russia and the region of the Vistula. The theory of the directing bureaucrats appeared to be that the people of

Poland should be sedulously excluded from participation in every kind of governmental activity, whether executive or judicial. All crimes, from the least to the greatest, were judged by magistrates who owed their office to the favour of the Russian Crown and were themselves of Russian nationality.

The barristers, indeed, who practice before the Courts are entirely Polish, and the Polish Bar has ever valued its high and honourable traditions. But nothing like a trade union or a professional protection society was allowed among the limbs of the law. The Russian State official, only in this carrying out the consistent theory of a centralized bureaucratic State, took good care to suppress the faintest and most incipient manifestations of independent associated life.

Furthermore, it was deemed a necessary part of this highly bureaucratic policy to place a rigid ban on the use and cultivation of the Polish language. Since 1905 there has been a slight alleviation in this policy of Thorough, because since that year country communes have been permitted to write and receive complaints in their mother-tongue. With this exception, granted under the pressure of great and menacing agitation among the peasants, the general statement holds true that Russian was, before the war, the official language in Poland of all the agencies of the Government. All legal documents were

written and all legal proceedings conducted in this one permissible tongue.

Only very minor officials were allowed to claim a Polish origin. The men entrusted with the main tasks of administration were Russian through and through, and they got certain advantages as to pay and superannuation because of the fact that they had to spend their official life in the regions of the Vistula.

Threatened lives, however, proverbially live long, and to-day, amid all the troubles incident to an armed German occupation, Polish still remains the only universal language understood in the regions of the Vistula. In Kholm especially desperate efforts were made by powerful Russian officials before the war to stamp out the national language, but amid the wrecks of the European war, having safely emerged from the bitterest of these attacks, it constitutes the sole and sufficient medium of social intercourse and commercial and intellectual life.

In other manifestations, too, of her constitutional life Poland has shown that she can remain unhurt after the passage of a bureaucratic roller. The basis of the law is not at present Russian, and no efforts have been able to make it so. Founded on the Code Napoleon, which was naturalized in the Duchy of Warsaw during that brief and glorious spurt of independent life which has been already described, it was incorporated finally in

a Polish code voted in 1825 by the Diet of the kingdom. Its main principle is the equality of all before the law—a principle dear to the Polish habit of thought, and which was proclaimed with no uncertain emphasis in the Constitution of 1807.

There was very far from being any real religious tolerance in Russia before the war. The Uniates, or dissenters, who practise an Orthodox Greek ritual while retaining Roman Catholic beliefs, have especially been the object of relentless persecution, and some of the Polish novelists have written poignant and unforgettable descriptions of the sorrow and sufferings of the scenes to which this persecution gave rise. Until 1905 these Uniates were not permitted, even if they desired to do so, to call themselves Roman Catholics. It is, of course, the Greek Orthodox Church of Russia which has been specially recognized and privileged in Poland. It alone, before the war, had the full right of proselytizing. Only its accredited priests can criticize other creeds either by writing or by word of mouth. It was comparatively easy to pass from an alien creed to that of the Holy Orthodox Church. But try the reverse process, and you discovered that the law interposed every kind of obstacle at every stage of the metamorphosis.

No Polish conscript could do his military training near his own home. Poland, before the war,

was filled with military camps in which soldiers from every other part of Russia were going through their forms of compulsory service. But the Polish soldier could derive no stimulus from his native soil. He was at once sent away for training to Manchuria or the Caucasus—in any case, to some spot where he was placed out of all relation with his native land.

However centralized might be the Russian administration in Poland, it was obliged to leave many momentous and fundamental decisions to the caprice of officials. That led to a lack of uniformity in the administration of the Statutes. The men at the helm of the province were almost irresistibly impelled to condemn independent speech, or to persecute those who claimed the faintest vestige of an advanced political right. The Governor-General of Warsaw could promulgate administrative orders which had really the force of laws, and which settled the fate, without any form or appearance of a fair trial, of any Pole who ventured to criticize the official hierarchy. There are few Poles to-day, of any breadth or freedom of thought, who have not exposed themselves, at some period or another, to the chastisements of this administrative law. They have peacefully listened at a political meeting, and on returning home they have found their house in the possession of the police. They have been in Warsaw one day and the next they

have found themselves in custody, on the way to some remote region of Siberia.

Such were the political disabilities of the Poles in Russia before the Great European War, but if the Russians chastised them with whips the Prussians chastised them with scorpions. Part of the sad story of the Duchy of Posen has been told in the chapter on the tillers of the soil, but the political treatment has been no less unhappy than the economic.

If promises counted for anything with the Prussian State, then might the Poles have expected better things in 1867. In that year the Duchy of Posen was received into the German Confederation, and King William of Prussia, who afterwards became the first German Kaiser, promised his Polish subjects that they should be restricted neither in the use of their mother-tongue nor in any other of their natural rights. Six years later all these promises were cast to the winds of heaven. German and not Polish was to be used in the schools, the Courts of Law, and in the ordinary administration of government. In 1908 the Reichstag refused to allow Polish newspapers to be exhibited for sale at the railway stations.

At the same time a war to the knife was carried on against all the Polish efforts at combination. The Prussian State has ever watched closely all kinds of smaller loyalties, and what-

ever might be the object which brought a band of Polish enthusiasts together, the Prussian Government dignified it by the name of political, and claimed to forbid its continuance as a menace to the power of Prussianism. On the other hand, let a number of Germans form any kind of combination to crush and extirpate the Poles, and then they would find the Government ready to help and encourage them to the utmost of its power. Thus did the Prussians attempt to crush all vitality and initiative out of the enterprising Polish race.

At first sight it might appear as if in Germany the Poles had a great deal more political power than in Russia. They sent representatives both to the Prussian Diet and the German Reichstag. About twenty Poles are to be found in each of the assemblies, and they have a strict and well-disciplined party, where each of the members is pledged to vote with his fellows and to use Parliament for the advancement of the national cause. Needless to say, the German Government has never been particularly pleased with all such signs of calculated political activity. Immense pressure of every degree and description—social, industrial, and political—is used in order to induce Polish workmen to vote according to the behests of the powers that be. In vain, however, is the net spread in the sight of any bird. The Polish workman is proud of the stirring and unchange-

able traditions of his historic race. Neither threats nor menaces cause him to deviate even by a hair's-breadth from what appears his plain and manifest duty. Vote solidly as he will he cannot, owing to the carefully planned suffrage of the Prussian Diet, secure for his nationality more than a small fraction of the representatives, but within the limit of his possibilities he will always act boldly and manfully.

It is easier for the workers to exert a substantial influence in the elections of the German Reichstag than it is in the Prussian Diet. In the former there is universal suffrage and a secret vote. In the latter there are three electoral colleges, divided according to the amount of direct taxation paid by the voters, and where a few wealthy electors in the richest college may send as many delegates to make the final election as a very much larger number of voters in the poorest of the colleges. Everything is adjusted in Prussia to serve the influence of the Junkers.

Similar steps are taken in the urban areas to secure a dominance of the characteristic spirit of Prussianism. Owing to this pernicious three-class system a few wealthy voters can practically neutralize the influence of all the rest of the people. The city of Posen is a centre of Polish population and sentiment, but the majority of members in its City Council is of German descent.

All throughout this Polish Duchy, in the small commune as in the larger urban district, there are similar artificial majorities, and, needless to say, these German hostages vote solidly together to prevent the political development of Poland.

Prussia is the entrenched home of bureaucracy, and all the power and efficiency of the bureaucratic machine is exerted to secure the political predominance of the Teuton. The officials are German to a man. If they show themselves particularly zealous in their efforts to crush the Poles, they receive special consideration in their pay and special promotion in the service. In all the other parts of Prussia the Landrath, or county governor, is elected by the people, but in Posen the corresponding official is the creature of the Government.

During the days when Bismarck was enthroned in power, the religious controversy added fresh bitterness to the economic and political differences, and the Prussian Government engaged in an uncompromising war with the Roman Catholic Church. But now the dispute has been settled, and the Government has taken the subtler course of endeavouring to use the national Church of the Poles as an instrument to secure its own permanent power and domination. Such intrigues often place the patriotic Pole in a troublesome position. He may be strongly attached to the Church of his fathers and devoutly worship at

her shrines, but if it comes to be a question between his nation and his Church in the domain, not of religion but of politics, he will refuse to allow the influence of any ecclesiastic to wean his best energies from the national cause.

Thus in the twentieth century did the great Central Empire of Germany attempt to crush out all vitality from the cause of Poland. Up to 1870 these same tactics were unsuccessfully tried by Austria, its ally and neighbour; but since that fateful year the Dual Monarchy has conceded autonomy to Galicia and allowed the Poles the one Polish Parliament which at present they possess in the world.

The Poles, under the system of universal suffrage which now obtains in Austria, elect their quorum of representatives to the Austrian Reichsrath; but it is the Diet of Galicia which specially interests them, and it was in that important Chamber where, before the war, they had an opportunity for showing those talents for administration and self-government which have never left them even in the darkest hours of their fate.

At the head of the Government of Galicia there was always a Pole, who directed affairs in the name of Austria. All the district officials are likewise Poles. The Speaker, or President of the Diet, who must also be a Pole, is technically named by the Emperor, but he could not continue

to hold his office unless he was supported by the Chamber. And everything which pertains to the particular economic and educational life of the Galician province is within the competence of this Home Rule Chamber. In rigid contrast to the condition of Prussian and Russian Poland, the administrative regulation of Austrian Poland is left within the jurisdiction of the Poles themselves.

Polish is the official language in Galicia, but in the eastern part of the province, where the majority of the people are Ruthenian, that language ranks equally with Polish as the official tongue. Polish conscripts are not compelled to go out of Galicia to do their military service, and though the word of command is given in German, the officers in Polish regiments are compelled to speak the tongue of the men under their charge.

In one part of Austria, the ancient Polish province of Spietz, the Poles are in the power of the Government of Hungary. There, as in Posen, small consideration is shown for Polish national feeling, and the people are deprived of all the rights of nationalities.

Nevertheless, even from the standpoint of a Central Power, the concession of Home Rule to the Poles in Austria has proved a great and undoubted success. In 1870 Galicia was under the yoke of an unsympathetic and alien

bureaucracy, and its economical and educational conditions were by no means a model to the surrounding nations. Now the roads are good. Education is more widely diffused. Small-holdings are encouraged. Everything tends to show how much better a historic people can manage affairs when it is master of its own destinies.

One result of the Galician experiment has been to show that the Poles, if in possession of the full rights of self-government, would manifest the same advanced political development as do the most progressive Western nations. In Galicia, after the Diet was established, the Conservative party was at first in complete and commanding supremacy. It was divided into two sections or wings, the first having its headquarters in Cracow and the second in Lwow. The Cracow Conservatives were University professors—strong individualists in economics, advanced in their ideas of science, and favouring a conciliatory policy to the Jews and Ruthenians. The Lwow Conservatives were landowners and bureaucrats, defending vested interests and the official classes, and not very sympathetically inclined to grant concessions to the Ruthenian peasants.

Together, however, they constituted one of the most powerful parties in the Austrian Reichsrath. They were always understood to have representatives in the different Austrian Ministries, and they

formed the Polish Club to keep the Polish deputies together, and to secure their combined votes when any great national advantage could be won by parliamentary methods. There were other interests in Galicia which had their representatives in Parliament, the Democratic Liberals, who were strong in urban areas and the representatives of the peasant parties. There was, also, a growing Socialist movement; but, owing to the restricted franchise in both Diet and Reichsrath, none of the other parties was able to obtain representation in anything like relation to its influence in the country. The Democratic parties, however, always belonged to the Polish Club. The Peasant parties, one of them more advanced, and the other representing the wealthier peasants, less advanced politically, were sometimes inside and sometimes outside the Polish Club. The Socialist party, on the other hand, in the days before the war, was always outside the Polish Club.

Who can doubt, with such conspicuous evidence before him of political development and activity, that the Polish people would be competent to deal with the most difficult problems of modern constitutional development? Many modern observers, in dealing with the country, have spoken as if the Austrian Conservative Poles, for example, stood for a certain definite stereotyped policy at some specific period—say, a con-

firmed disposition to grant no large number of concessions to the Ruthenians. But, as we have seen from the above account, it was impossible to speak of the Galician Conservatives, even in the days of their power, as completely identical in their opinions. They were at one in their love for Poland undoubtedly; they all desired to see the divided people united and entrusted with the control of their own internal affairs. But beyond this there were in the Conservative party, as we have seen, the school of Cracow and the school of Lwow, and each of these looked in a different way at some of the special administrative problems that emerged from day to day. It is true that, as we have seen exemplified in the whole history of Poland from the beginning of the nineteenth century, there has been a constant and steady progress of all the parties in the direction of democracy.

This was manifest in the Austrian Polish Club after the electoral reform of 1905. Up to that time the influence of the Conservatives had been paramount, but after 1907 their domination came to an end and a University professor became for the first time chairman of the Club. Just before the war commenced the political history of the Austrian Poles had arrived at a most interesting and important stage, and there was always an idea abroad that the liberation of Poland, when it did come, would come as the

result of a difference between Austria and Russia.

Not the same political opportunities, of course, are open to the other parts of Poland as we have seen available in the self-governing province of Galicia. In Posen there can be only one party, the party of Poland, and he that is not for it is against it. But in Russian Poland, notwithstanding all the administrative discouragements, the Poles have never ceased to have a political history, and to develop their constitutional opinions on the most progressive lines of Western civilization.

After 1863 the bigger landowners formed a Conservative party which, on the whole, favoured an understanding with Russia. This party, however, was not long suffered to remain in possession of the field. Another movement arose, which afterwards became the National League, and the object of which was to educate the peasants and arouse interest everywhere in the national cause. This National League could not be a political party because Russian Poland had no political rights, but, in spite of this, there can be no question of the great influence it exercised on the rising youth of Poland. It issued manifestos through various secret or legal presses. It published educational pamphlets. It had a monthly magazine—the *All-Polish Review*. One of its basic opinions was that all Poland is one and undivided, and hence this review was pub-

lished at Cracow and from thence smuggled into Warsaw. The hope of the advanced Radicals, who were the mainstay of this League, was an educated and intelligent peasantry. "Win the small-holders," they said, "and the future of Poland is sure."

This aspiration remained predominant in the minds of the reformers until, in the early eighties of last century, Socialism began to make disciples in Poland, as in other European countries, among the urban proletariat. Before Socialist propagandists had been heard of in Russian Poland itself there had been a good deal of discussion amongst small groups of exiles in Paris and elsewhere. But it was not until these different groups coalesced and formed what is now known as the "P.P.S." that Socialism began to exert a political influence in the country—an influence which increased as the National League became less democratic in its tendencies. The Socialism of the "P.P.S." had a character and a programme all its own. Although it was strongly Marxian, it put forward the claim for an independent Poland; and yet it could never, in the present position of its native country, translate its Marxianism into those schemes of authoritative State Socialism so dear to the Socialists of Germany. But it caused a fresh and intimate discussion of all pending political problems everywhere throughout the country, and it was mainly

because of this searching of hearts that the National League became the National Democratic party—a definite political union of what were then the distinctively Liberal elements in the population.

These groupings continued until 1905, since when most remarkable political activity has been visible in all the great cities of Russian Poland. This was especially manifest just before the war, so much so that it almost seemed as if the country were preparing, before the event, for some remarkable change in its destinies. For some time large sections of the Polish progressives had been discontented with the old National Democratic party. The latter had gained the day in the elections for the first Duma, and they formed with the Conservatives a powerful Polish Club, with the idea of extorting from the Russian bureaucracy whatever concessions they could. Still faithful to this idea of concession, they did not join the representatives of the other Russian opposition parties in the notable retreat to Wiborg. Events, however, appeared to demonstrate the futility of such a policy of concessions. After the second Duma Poland was deprived of two-thirds of her representatives. The Russian governing classes seemed more stubborn and obdurate than ever. To meet these altered circumstances a *bloc* was formed of all the independent and progressive parties in Poland, and

by the time of the third Duma this *bloc* had prepared a list of candidates to run in opposition to those of the National Democratic party.

It was in these elections that the Jewish Question emerged as one of the most pressing and difficult political problems of modern Poland. Its economical implications have already been discussed in a previous chapter, and there can be no doubt that, apart from the 100,000 Russian Jews almost discharged into Poland as the result of the policy of M. Stolypin, it would not have become so menacing as it was in the days just before the war. But these Russian Jews, thus dumped down into the country, were necessarily out of sympathy with Polish national aspirations and hopes; and accordingly, in the elections for the third Duma, they ran a rival list of candidates, and brought about an electoral deadlock in the electoral college of the first instance between them and the elected representatives of the progressive parties.

What was to be done? Who was to be the representative for Warsaw in the Duma? The Jews approached the progressive parties and asked for some guarantee of equality of rights. This it was difficult to give at the time, because of the great influx of Russian Jews and the fact, which has been already noted in the third chapter, that in some towns the Jews are in a majority. The consequence was that the Jews then took one

of the working-class factory representatives and, aided by the other, used their electoral strength to make a Socialist the representative of Warsaw in a Russian Duma.

All this history has been retailed in order to make plain the extensive political activity of Poland amid the many discouragements of its national life to-day. The people have never ceased to be interested in the most modern constitutional developments. There can be no doubt that the war, for example, has made the Jewish problem more acute than before, and there are even some of the Russian Liberals who are disposed to blame the prevailing Polish attitude on the subject. But that is because some one section or other has been looked on as completely representative of the whole main current of opinion in Polish political thought. When we remember that the Poles are not a stagnant but a developing people, that the twentieth century has seen their independent and progressive influences immensely strengthened and accentuated, that their dominating modern tendency, where they have administrative control, is to pursue a policy of conciliation and to pay the utmost deference to the claims of the minority, then we need not despair of seeing the Jewish problem settled ultimately on the same lines on which it has been successfully settled in Great Britain and in the United States of America.

For again it must be emphasized—what has been shown again and again in the course of the previous discussion—that the tendencies and political aims and methods of Poland are entirely Western. When the war broke out the Austrian Polish Club met at Cracow, together with the political organizations which they represented, and elected a National Supreme Council, which has been since endeavouring to get into political relations with a similar body in Russian Poland. It is certainly not all over with this old historic country, and although the war brought for its people ruined crops and forsaken factories, they have never ceased to devote their minds, amid all the discouragements of a German occupation, to the pressing problem of their own political destiny.

CHAPTER VI

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

POLITICAL progress is one of the most characteristic signs of a country's complex vitality. Only a very few of the most advanced nations in Western civilization have acquired the mutual toleration, or have realized the constant agreement to differ, which politics inevitably involves. That Poland, divided up amongst three great predatory States, should yet be capable of developing political interests and political divisions of opinion, is, in itself, the most convincing proof that the chains are falling off her shoulders. As a matter of fact, the whole history of the nation from 1815 to 1915 and the Great European War is the record of a continuous effort to extricate herself from the evils that bind her.

At first her people resisted by applying force to force. They met the stern repression of the bureaucrat by armed remonstrance and insurrection. After 1815 the Grand Duke Constantine, a brother of the Tsar Alexander I, became head of the Polish Army, and speedily governed by

coercion and repression. Personal liberty was a dream of the past. Arbitrary imprisonment became a reality of the present. The Lieutenant-General of the kingdom and his ministers were Poles, but they were obliged to defer in everything to the Grand Duke and to Novossiltzoff, the Imperial Commissioner.

The Poles bore this exasperating regime in a way which extorted admiration from all the free and generous spirits of Europe. Their energies were crippled on every side. They could indulge in no desires for political achievement. They were at the mercy of hard and implacable taskmasters. Only the economic field remained open for their conquest. So casting off all fear of future restrictions, the Polish administration entered on a wonderful economic activity. The country was covered with roads. The Bank of Poland opened its doors. The Diet passed a series of laws wonderfully adapted to stimulate and encourage all the manifestations of industrial life.

But that was not all. Forbidden to combine openly for the prosecution of political reforms, the Poles combined secretly, and that to some effect. A mysterious society called the Templars was instituted in 1822 with the aim of restoring the national independence and establishing a liberal system of constitutional government. The result was the rising of November 29, 1830,

during which the Polish Army held for ten months a large Russian army in check, and gave proof in every military engagement of the most incomparable heroism.

After the suppression of the insurrection the chains were drawn around Poland more tightly than ever. The Diet had to close its doors. The Polish Army was no longer recognized as a separate military establishment. But still the modern Prometheus struggled for freedom from all the encircling fetters. Still Poland cherished in her spirit the dreams of a coming deliverance. In France, to which many of her exiles bent their steps, the astonished world beheld the signs of a remarkable literary revival. Three great national poets, Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Krasinski, wrote and published to declare that a still more glorious day for Poland had yet to come. There was little to encourage them in the sombre present. The land was strewn with the wrecks of ancient battlefields. "Wring a clod of earth in your hands anywhere in all our lands and blood drips out," exclaims a Polish patriot to his friends. "Go north in the name of Christ," cries the Irydion of Krasinski, "and stop first in the land of graves and crosses. Thou mayest know it by the silence of its warriors and the melancholy of its little children." Impassioned mystics preached the doctrines of a new Messiah of the nations, expiating by her agony the tyrannical

cruelties of the whole world. Poets dwelt on the legendary figures of the past, those especially who stood up to the most powerful of despots, and struck at them with the recklessness of hatred or despair.

Yet one thing kept Poland alive then, and to-day this makes Poland more than the weeping Niobe of nations—her faculty for combination and initiative. She had never been a unitary State when the people were moved like marionettes, and everything was administered and regulated from above. Even in the days when the States around her granted place and power to a very select class, Poland had a nobility without titles or precedence which numbered about a tenth of her population, and every member of this numerous class felt that the destiny of the commonwealth depended upon him. It was therefore a band of self-sufficient and self-respecting exiles, strong in faith and apt in plans and stratagems, that scattered abroad throughout Europe when the governmental repression grew unbearable at home. The famous Society of Young Poland, which was one of the organizations which owe their inception to the commanding influence of Mazzini, was founded in 1834. Propose some new and fascinating plan for striking a blow for freedom, and you were sure to find friends and agents amongst the Poles!

Their national life was irrepressible! Crushed

down at one part of the old Polish country it only showed itself, more strongly than ever, at another! Held down by the iron heel in Russia, it showed itself in Galicia and Posen as a new and vigorous Home Rule movement. An insurrection broke out at Cracow. The Austrian Government behaved with cool and calculated cunning, and by sowing seeds of discord between the Polish peasants and the Polish proprietors, it strove to take away their power to injure from the fomenters of rebellion. For the time these dastardly tactics succeeded. The Galician peasants rose in revolt and massacred more than 2,000 of their proprietors. Then the great States who had parted Poland's lands between them began to move. Austrian troops marched into Cracow, and the last free and independent Polish city still existing in Europe was solemnly annexed by the spoiler.

Nevertheless, the Polish Prometheus always continued to struggle for light and liberty. In 1848, when a wave of rebellion passed over Europe, and nationalities, long repressed, woke again to a sense of renewed and independent life, the Polish exiles felt that they had received a call to arms. Chrzanowski and Zamoyski fought for Italy. Microstawski was the acknowledged chief of the insurrection in the Grand Duchy of Baden. In Hungary, where an ancient people were fighting for their life against Austria and

Russia, the Polish Generals, Bem and Dembinski, covered themselves with immortal glory.

It is strange that at Berlin, of all places in the world, one of the most characteristic of these Polish outbreaks occurred. In March 1849 a German deputation demanded of the King of Prussia that he should liberate all the Poles who were put in prison after the insurrection of 1846. Frederick William IV, more fitted to be a professor than a prince, yielded to the show of constraint, and the people of Berlin received the released Polish patriots with loud cries of "Long live Poland. Let us march against Russia!"

Berlin in such an outbreak had certainly given the cue to Posen. A national committee was appointed in the latter place, and the Poles who composed it set out at once for the capital to obtain from the King pledges for their future free government. They were full of enthusiasm, all of them, as they set out, believing that war with Russia was imminent, and knowing that their compatriots were forming a formidable legion to stand and fight for Poland in the forefront of the coming battle. They soon found, however, as their fathers had found before them, that it is vain to trust too implicitly in the word of a Prussian prince. Frederick William IV, who had been all complacency before, was now as obstinate and unyielding as he had been before complacent. He was determined to give nothing and to learn

nothing, and he issued orders to destroy by force the Polish Army.

Not yet, however, had the power of Polish nationality anything like exhausted itself! From Berlin the spirit of insurrection passed to Vienna. At Cracow and Lwow committees were formed, and these committees sent to Vienna a petition demanding the liberation of the peasants. In this document it was manifested conclusively that the leaders, who were struggling to free Poland from her chains, were no narrow oligarchy, anxious only for the preservation of their own precious privileges. Their petition proved them fully in sympathy with all the most advanced political and economic demands of the time. To show, too, that their sympathy was no impracticable and fruitless feeling, the Polish proprietors practised what they preached. They gave of their own free will to their own peasants all the liberty which they demanded for them in the whole land universally.

Needless to say, there was great consternation among the bureaucrats of Vienna at this dangerous turn of affairs. It was plain that the liberty of the peasants was an accomplished reality. It was better—such are the maxims of policy dear to the bureaucrats of every age and land—to yield gracefully what in any case would inevitably be extorted by the mere logic of events. An imperial decree, dated April 1848, declared

invalid all the gifts of liberty given to the peasants by private initiative, but immediately restored this same precious liberty as an act of imperial clemency. As for any other political or economic reforms, they were too dangerous for the governors of a despotic and military State.

Despite all disappointments, Poland still struggled on. Italy extricated herself from the bonds which connected her with Austria, and the consequent triumph for the principle of nationality brought joy to every true Polish heart. Austria and Prussia met these manifestations of renewed life with the old method of repression. Alexander II, who had become Tsar of Russia in 1856, while he affirmed his intention to continue the policy of his father, seemed to have a dim foreboding that there was something he could neither touch nor destroy in the Polish national consciousness. "No more dreams, Messieurs," said he to a Polish deputation which visited him after his accession,—“no more dreams!” And yet how often are the dreams of yesterday the stern realities of to-day!

So, at any rate, it proved with Poland! Again in 1863 an insurrection broke out, and it was preceded by circumstances which showed how indefatigable is the action of this great people. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that if there is one circumstance that shows that a country has passed from the stage of the unitary

State, where all is guided and controlled by autocrats above, to the stage of the nation where there is a government of the people, by the people, for the people, it is the extent to which liberty of combination is permitted and fostered. A free people must inevitably combine. The spirit of comradeship and brotherhood has free scope in their midst. They form combinations when the assent of each is voluntarily rendered, and where the object of each is the advantage of the whole.

One of the most notable of these combinations was an agricultural society at Warsaw, with which Count Zamoyski was connected, and which continued to act as a centre of patriotic aspirations until it was eventually suppressed. Then the people perplexed the Cossacks and baffled the Russian military directors by resorting to the method of Passive Resistance, long before it was dreamed of in our own country or suggested by the Syndicalists. Crowds gathered in the streets to carry the White Eagle of Poland in a highly picturesque torchlight procession. Other crowds of people remained impassive in the churches and simply refused to leave them. To such an unexampled decision did the force of events drive him that General Gortschakoff, the governor at that time, handed over the administration of the city for several weeks to a Polish delegation.

In fact, the whole course of the insurrection

showed that Poland, during all these years of repression, had been making fresh history unnoticed and was now fully abreast of the most advanced modern ideas and opinions. The soldiers at the head of the 1863 movement had not lost the traditional skill of their race, for, though it was only a battle of guerilla bands against the whole overwhelming military strength of Russia, they maintained a wavering and dubious contest for about fifteen months before the rising was finally subdued.

Even more remarkable, however, than the military resource of the leaders was the political boldness and resource of an unknown army of the rank and file. There was a union of all classes against the menace of the common foe. All religious communities—Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish—made common cause through their clergy, and rabbis. The Democratic Warsaw Committee, composed of twelve members, mostly young men, and whose ranks were at once filled up as any one of the members lost his life for his country, issued a proclamation which is the best answer that can be given to the frequent taunt that the government of Poland was and ever could be a closed corporation of the aristocrats:—

“This being the first day of open resistance,” said this proclamation of January 22, 1863, “and of the beginning of a holy struggle, the Committee declares all the sons of Poland to be free

and equal, without distinction of creed and social status. It declares, furthermore, that the land formerly held by the agricultural population in fee, for soccage, labour, or rent, henceforth becomes their freehold property, without any restriction whatsoever. The landowners will receive indemnification from the national treasury. All cottagers and field labourers who shall serve and the families of those who may die in the cause of the country, will receive allotments from the national property, in land received from the enemy."

With a spirit and resolution such as this, how could the Polish Prometheus be permanently bound? Even during the later reign of the present Tsar, after the proclamation of the Russian Constitution, efforts have been made to repress all continued manifestations of independent life in private companies and associations. Polish railway companies were forbidden to use the language of their race. There even took place in 1911 what has been called the Fourth Partition of Poland. The eastern part of the government of Lublin was amputated from the country, and united to Russia, in direct violation of the conventions of the Congress of Vienna.

The year 1863 had marked the close of the era of physical force and revolution. Poland was surrounded by three great States, directly and efficiently organized for the prosecution of the

war, and as soon as any breath of rebellion was detected one or more of these States was mobilized to crush the insurrection. But there were signs in 1863 that the three partitioning States were not united. They might not remain for ever closely resolved to bring their common forces to bear on the discomfiture of Poland. Therefore might it not be the best policy for Liberal and progressive elements in the troubled country, to combine together for the preservation of their national vitality? They might keep Poland alive, fresh and free in the ardour of her democratic hopes, with her whole outlook and aspirations ever a standing rebuke to the reactionary spirit of Prussianism.

It was then, as has been already pointed out, that the National League was founded to educate the peasants and arouse interest everywhere in the national cause. Later on the whole aspect of the land problem was changed by the crowning triumphs of the principle of agricultural co-operation. Poland, even where, as in Russia, her energies were repressed by severe and implacable administrative ordinances, developed voluntary associations and the germs of political parties, and it was perfectly plain that wherever she had the opportunity of independent life she would have the men and the materials to build up an existence on the most approved Western models. The conviction began to dawn in the

minds of many, who were in the forefront of her movement that some day, there would be a great war between the partitioning Powers, and, as the result of that war, Poland would once again be endowed with the blessed gift of independence.

This conviction was strengthened as the facts dealt with in the Prologue were closely scrutinized, and as it was recognized that neutral States played a great and practically an indispensable part in the preservation of the European balance of the Great Powers. On the western front there were three of these buffer Powers, Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland, but there was none at all on the eastern front. Poland had been suppressed just where she appeared to be most needed to keep apart the troublesome combatants. She could have become a nation much more powerful and formidable than any of the buffer States on the western front, and hence she appeared to supply just what was conspicuously needed in the European system.

When the Great European War arose it was plain that she had men in her midst distinguished by all the higher gifts of statesmanship, and ready to take their place at the helm of their country's destinies. In Russian Poland committees were established comprised both of Poles and Jews, and the history of these committees, when it comes to be written, and the way in which they dealt with the difficult problem pre-

sented on every side by the ravages of war, will be one of the most conclusive evidences of the continuing national vitality of partitioned Poland.

There is no more indubitable evidence, however, that the Polish Prometheus is being really unbound than the educational progress that is being made in the country, even when weighed down by great and overwhelming catastrophe. Other countries are slowing the activities of their educational machine, as they realize that all their best energies must be directed to the destructive game of war. Poland has still her best minds directed to the educational needs of the future. It is worth while devoting a few lines to this subject of education before this survey of Poland's emancipating energies comes to an end.

The partitioned parts of the country have each of them throughout the nineteenth century been distinguished by a zeal for education. In Polish Prussia there are obligatory schools in the humblest hamlets. Only since 1873 have these schools been Germanized, so that before that date they had already a sufficient amount of time to permit Polish culture to permeate all the masses of the people. There is no part of Poland where more newspapers are read or Polish books studied. The *Gazeta Grundziacka*, which appears at the provincial town of Graudenz, near Dantzig, has

a circulation of about 100,000 copies. It is this habit of reading, and keeping themselves fully abreast of the time, which has awakened the national consciousness of Prussian Poland, and which has made the people solid and staunch in their opposition to the encroaching onset of Teutonism.

This feeling of solidarity and of the national integrity which is bound ultimately to set Poland free from every fetter was also manifested most decisively when the Government tried to banish the mother-language from the schools. Since then all the Polish newspapers in Prussian Poland have appeared with the words in a prominent part of the front page, "Teach your children to read and write in Polish." And these words were not simply the expression of a vague and platonic hope. There were those in the national movement who made such aspirations a reality. The children themselves vigorously supported the efforts of their elders, and at one time the astonished world was greeted with the spectacle of a Polish children's strike.

In Russian Poland education has been advanced by the Poles in the face of increasing difficulties. In 1830 the Russian Government ceased to consider school attendance compulsory, and even commenced to close the rural schools.¹ Yet the

¹ It is surely a remarkable fact that before 1830 school attendance was compulsory in Poland.

cause of education was not wholly lost. In the reign of Alexander II a Pole, the Marquis Wielopolski, obtained control of the educational machine and immediately set himself to organize primary instruction. But after his period of influence ceased matters began to drift back in the old reactionary direction, so that as late as 1886 an order was made by which Russian was proclaimed the language for all kinds of instruction.

In 1908 the Duma passed a law to ensure that the number of schools should be proportionate to the needs of the population. Notwithstanding the promise of this law, there were in 1911 only 4,659 schools with 338,433 pupils. That is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the population—an unsatisfactory result, which is due to the fact that patriotic Poles avoided them when all the lessons could only be given in Russian. But in order to fill up the gap the Poles organized many voluntary associations to give clandestine instruction in the mother-tongue throughout the length and breadth of the land. It is due to the efforts of these self-sacrificing associations that, though the numbers of children in attendance at the schools does not appear to be large, the number of illiterates has gone down about 25 per cent.

How much the Poles can be trusted to give their people the benefits of education may be seen from the example of Galicia. Before this

province was made autonomous, the level of public instruction was low; but as soon as Home Rule became an accomplished reality the Diet voted money for educational purposes, and the Independent Council of Education worked without ceasing to heighten the level of education and to increase the number of the schools. In the year 1910-11, Galicia could boast of 5,412 elementary schools, with 1,041,082 pupils, 13½ per cent. of the total population, and five times more than the official statistics record in Russian Poland. Only about one commune in a hundred cannot boast of a school, and where the majority of the people are Ruthenian instruction is given in that language.

There are two Polish Universities in Russian Poland—that of Warsaw and that of Wilna. Both were closed by the Russian Government after the revolution of 1831. In 1862 the advent to power of the Marquis Wielopolski caused that of Warsaw to be revived under the name of a higher school. It lasted only seven years, but seven years were amply sufficient for it to do a notable work in the way of instructing the people and reviving the best traditions of Polish scientific activity. Many distinguished men were then its alumni, amongst them being Henryk Sienkiewicz, the well-known Polish novelist.

In 1869 the higher school was closed and a Russian University formed in its place. There

was also founded in Warsaw a Polytechnic and a veterinary school ; and at Pulawy, midway between Warsaw and Lublin, a higher school of agriculture and forestry. All these institutions, however, had their instruction given in Russian, and in 1905, a year of revolution in the Empire, the Polish students left them in a solid mass. It was a fresh evidence that the Polish Prometheus was taking advantage of all the changing methods of a rapidly changing time. The Russian Government, however, retorted by closing all these higher institutions ; and though they were reopened again in 1908, the Polish students did not a second time begin the habit of regular attendance. Young Poles now finished their education at the Universities of Cracow and Lwow, and the Russian Government were obliged to resort to all manner of devices to ensure an attendance of Russian students in the class-rooms of the University of Warsaw.

So far as technical education is concerned, the Poles of Russian Poland have shown their old instinct of combination and have organized private educational associations to take care of the interests of their youth. Movements of this kind are the School for the Study of Mechanics and Technology, and the Agricultural, Educational, and Economic Institutes which have their centre at Warsaw. Nothing can be finer than the public-spirited generosity which the wealthier

Poles have shown in this department of their life.

The child is father to the man, and with such excellent arrangements for every kind of education it is no wonderful thing to find every evidence of tenacity and vitality in the whole national life of Poland. Societies of sympathizers meet together. All kinds of causes dear to the Western heart find in Poland a means of effectual private propaganda. There are scientific societies in Warsaw and Wilna. There is an academy of sciences at Cracow, the influence of which extends to all the three parts of Poland. There is also a fund to help the efforts of Polish investigators, who, like Madame Curie, are prominent in every kind of research. The Russian Government can hardly be said to look with a particularly benevolent eye on such efforts, and it is due to the private subscriptions and initiative of the Poles themselves that they are crowned with such a large measure of success.

Thus does the population of Poland grow, not only in numbers, but in the complicated fullness of its life. There is nothing in this enlightened country of the methods and temper of the merely unitary State. It is not simply Eclipse first and the rest nowhere. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the history of the country has been a continuous democratic advance. The people themselves expect a share in the direction

of their much-loved nation. The leaders of the people do their utmost to place at the disposal of the sons and daughters of the poorest opportunities for development and culture.

It is not by brute force, but by the stronger and more persuasive force of the spirit that Prometheus will be unbound. In 1908 there appeared 3,504 Polish books, and these comprised productions in every department of human thought. All these works, read and re-read, wherever the Poles are gathered together, are bound to exert a great and growing influence for good. Poland must become independent and free because she has instructed herself to bear the responsibilities of independence and freedom. She will inevitably form her people into a nation of the future, because she has trained them no longer to regard themselves as "dumb, driven cattle," but to unite into irresistible groups for the influencing and conquest of their own independent destinies.

EPILOGUE

POLAND AND THE WEST

THE history of Poland Present has amply demonstrated her claims to national vitality. Here is a people who, if admitted again to independent existence within their old limits, would constitute a State greater in population than France and Britain, and only surpassed in Europe by Germany and Russia, the greatest petrol-producing land in Europe and the third in the world, a country which has tripled her population since 1816, and which could, as an independent State, put as many as five million men into the field of battle, and which yet, divided up among three great predatory neighbours, and persecuted, oppressed, and thwarted, has still maintained intact her common traditions and interests, and to-day confronts the world in three contending armies with her consciousness of national aspirations undiminished and undimmed. No wonder that, with such a history and records, Poland has received the appropriate name of "the Phoenix of Europe."

How has this political miracle become possible? The story of Poland before and after her partitions has rendered fairly easy the answer to such a question. For one thing, the fatal blindness of the despots who divided her is responsible for one of the causes of her continued energy and vitality. History shows that wherever a State is not coterminous in territory or where some wedge is driven into its possessions which prevents free and unimpeded access from one part to another, that State continues in a condition of perpetual restlessness until the obstacles are removed. It is this consideration which will make the position of Dantzic so important for the future of the new Europe. Poland will need free passage to Dantzic for the development of her economic powers and potencies, and yet a Prussia with any part of its western domains in the hand of another would be a continuing enemy to the peace of the world.

Who can doubt that a Poland divided up into three separate parts is for ever debarred from settling again into a condition of contented submission or acquiescence? Instead of constituting only a single question, the Polish problem is thereby divided into two main questions. There is first the question of the reunion of those separate parts which cannot be satisfied in their isolation. There is, secondly,—and what is much more essential in the eyes of the Poles,—the con-

sideration of the demand for the ancient national independence. Either aspect of the problem is sufficient to keep the Polish people alive as a protesting force in the heart of Europe. But the first, with its present-day grim and grisly tragedy of conscripts belonging to the same homogeneous people fighting against each other across a no-man's-land of intolerable flame, is in itself so unsettling that it entitles the satisfaction of the Polish demands to the first consideration of Europe.

Progress is the law of the universe. Unless a nation progresses, it is very soon overtaken and submerged. Every great modern State is a conglomerate of many tribes and races to whom at first some measure of coercion may have been applied, but who have now ceased to have a separate history by blending their aims and aspirations with the aims and aspirations of the whole. Poland has, within its old historic borders, 3,094,454 people speaking the language of Lithuania, and 13,320,000 speaking the language of Ruthenia.¹ These races were not forcibly incorporated under the Polish hegemony; for Poland was never in the past a conquering or merely predatory Power. There was in the old days an expression, "*Gente Ruthenus, natione Polanus*," which shows how completely at that time the Polish union of races had become a

¹ These figures are taken from the census of 1897.

Polish union of hearts. Mickiewicz, the greatest of the Polish poets, was of Lithuanian origin, and though he was also the greatest of the Polish patriots he could write the words, "Lithuania my fatherland," because for him Lithuanians and Poles were alike the free citizens of the one great and undivided Polish Republic.

Polish nationality, not only continued unrepressed and irrepressible during the nineteenth century which has been surveyed in the historical sketches of Poland Present, but it still continues to-day amid the trials and bereavements of a great European war. Her people were seldom content to have their policy dictated by the few. They were the European inheritors of the spacious traditions of the Athenian *Ekklesia*. And no sooner were the German armies in occupation of the kingdom and a large measure of independent life given to the municipality of Warsaw than the Polish administrators showed that they could keep in touch with all the most advanced constitutional experiments of Western democracy. Electoral rights, in the reconstituted municipality, were conferred by the Germans on all men of twenty-five or over, natives of the kingdom of Poland, who had been resident in Warsaw for at least two consecutive years. About the middle of 1916 the electors were divided into six wards, each of which elects five representatives. The first ward consists of landed proprietors, the second of important

commercial and industrial men, the third of members of the liberal professions, the fourth of men engaged in the smaller industries and commercial firms of minor importance, the fifth of those who pay taxes or rent, and the sixth of all the other eligible electors. Women possess electoral rights under certain conditions, but they are obliged to waive them in practice in favour of a male elector.

These are no doubt characteristically German constitutional arrangements, and the division of the voters reminds one of the class rule which is such a distinctive feature of the gospel of Prussianism. Yet the representation of classes and industries has been made a feature in the scientific scheme of representation by the Belgian sociologist De Greef, and the Germans have at least paid a compliment to the democratic and educational propensities of the Poles by instituting representatives of the liberal professions to guard against the excessive influence of wealth. At any rate, the Poles at once showed, when they came to the elections under the scheme, that they had progressed very much farther in the political and constitutional direction than the Germans. Two elective committees were organized. There appeared the germs of two distinct political parties just as they now exist in Great Britain, with a constitutional history going far back in uninterrupted continuity into the dim distance of the past. The National Elective

Committee are the Conservatives of this municipal resurrection. They lay emphasis on the fact that the new Municipal Council should be Polish in speech and spirit, and should be capable of representing the national instinct of Poland. The Democratic Elective Committee, on the other hand, are the Liberals of the new movement, and in addition to their proclamation of the immortal desire of the Polish nation for an independent existence, they publish an advanced programme of communal politics, including the democratization of public life, toleration of all shades of opinion and belief, complete equality of rights, and schemes for dealing with future unemployment.¹

So much, in fact, is perfectly evident for the future, that, whenever the Poles again get control of their own constitutional destinies, they will be able to start an independent existence upon the most approved Western lines. There need be no fear of a repetition of those scenes which in the past have made the Austrian Reichsrath more like a bear-garden than a Parliament. Wherever the Polish exiles have gone they have carried with them the traditions of democracy and freedom. When the Germans

¹ I have already dealt with the organization of the previous Polish Citizens' Committee in Warsaw in an article on "The Resurrection of Poland" in the *Contemporary Review* of October 1915.

were elaborating their scheme for the representation of Warsaw they were confronted with a communication from the Polish League of Feminist Societies, in which that body demanded the full recognition of the right of women to vote. When the third Conference of Nationalities was held in 1916 in Switzerland, the Polish political organizations in that country sent to the President of the "Union of Nationalities" a declaration on national politics which for enlightened breadth and comprehensiveness cannot be surpassed. They declared (1) that they recognized the undeniable right of every nation to decide its own fate, (2) they could not look for the incorporation into the Poland of the future of any nationality against its own will, (3) that rights of minority nationalities should be scrupulously respected, (4) that people of non-Polish nationality within the jurisdiction of Poland should enjoy all civic rights, (5) that they adhered strictly to the principle of religious liberty, which they would like to see extended to every State, (6) that Jews should enjoy complete equality of rights in Poland, as in every other country in which they reside.

It is this tolerant, progressive, and freedom-loving spirit of the Poles which enshrines the distinctive quality of their nationality, and which has made them a power to be reckoned with in the international politics of to-day. The late

Lord Acton, in an essay on "Nationality," once declared that the three subversive and revolutionary principles in the Europe of the nineteenth century have been equality, communism, and nationality. Of these, the principle of nationality is inseparably associated with the fate and influence of Poland. The Partition of Poland, in fact, condemned the Europe of the nineteenth century to a future of everlasting unrest. "Thenceforward," to use Lord Acton's own most appropriate words, "there was a nation demanding to be united in a State, a soul, as it were, wandering in search of a body in which to begin life over again; and for the first time a cry was heard that the arrangement of States was unjust—that their limits were unnatural, and that a whole people was deprived of its right to constitute an independent community."

How unsettling has been the influence of a wronged Poland on the international politics of Europe can be easily discerned from the memoirs of the period. No one can doubt, for example, that Bismarck had his hand on the springs that moved the politics of Western civilization in the nineteenth century; and Bismarck, in one and another notable passage of his *Reminiscences*, sees the spectre of Polish liberalism pass between him and the contentment of autocracy. The Partitions of Poland prevented the earlier realization of Prussian hegemony and the German Empire.

"In 1786," he complains, "the chief interest was not as yet centred in national German territory, but rather in the idea of territorial acquisition in Poland." The same cause was a continual unsettling influence in Russian politics, for the Russian Liberals, whom Bismarck suspected and thwarted, excused their demand for a Constitution by referring to Polish affairs. Even so far back as 1863 Bismarck believed that the crucial question which a Prussian statesman must ask is whether the Russian Cabinet is dominated by Polish or anti-Polish proclivities. If by anti-Polish proclivities, then Prussia might have a chance. If by Polish proclivities, then Prussianism was for ever held at a distance. Poland he looked upon as the eternal enemy of Prussianism. "Germans," he declared, "would never submit to the direction of the common policy by Polish statesmen, whereas Russians might."

This, from a virtual dictator of European international policy during the greater part of his life, is conclusive as to the influence exerted by the partitioned nationality in unsettling the autocratic arrangements of 1815. Bismarck felt that the Polish influence was unsettling because he recognized in the Poles the advance guards of the most enlightened ideas of Western democracy. In 1830, in 1848, and in 1863 the same profound and unsettling influence of this Polish

“soul wandering in search of a body,” was felt in France, but this time it was not the repulsion of antagonism but the attraction—at least so far as the French people were concerned—of boundless sympathy and affection. “The rising at Warsaw,” says Louis Blanc, when narrating the events of 1830, “when it became known in Paris, was hailed with wild enthusiasm. The heroism of the Poles was the topic of the theatres. People rushed into the streets, crying out, ‘Poland is free!’ It was in France a national joy-day, a second July Revolution. ‘Help to our brothers in Poland!’ was the cry from every heart.” Who can doubt that, with such a spirit liable to revive on critical occasions, Europe could not be bound in the swaddling clothes of autocratic diplomatists?

In 1848 the influence of the dismembered Poland was so great that it became a serious menace to the provisional Government of Lamartine. At the opening of the Assembly on the 15th of May, a great avalanche of petitions claiming freedom for Poland descended on the floor of the Assembly. One of them, read at length in the Chamber, condemned the “panic-stricken and egoistic policy” of the Government and demanded (1) that the cause of Poland should be identified with that of France, (2) that the restitution of Polish nationality should be obtained either peacefully or by force of arms, (3) that a

French army should be held ready to depart immediately a refusal was received to the French ultimatum. So much excitement was produced by the reading of this petition that Blanqui called for a general rising, and an abortive revolutionary effort was the result. The effort was abortive ; but the very fact that it was made showed how unrestful for France at a crisis of her fate was the recollection of this "nation demanding to be united in a State."

Again in 1863 it was amply demonstrated that an unsettled Polish problem is of serious import for the future restfulness of France. It was then that Mazzini was laying deep the basis of the doctrine of nationality, and Poland occupied no small share of his thoughts. "There was," says Karl Blind, "a small group of men of various nationalities in London, who, nearly three weeks before the Polish outbreak of 1863, knew the very day when it would take place. Among them I may mention, first and foremost, Mazzini and Ledru-Rollin." But Ledru-Rollin—though formerly a name to be conjured with—was then an exile from his native land. It is possible to connect Poland much more directly with the actual French Government of the time. "Besides the two chief committees at Warsaw," again says Karl Blind, "there were several smaller secret organizations in Poland. Some of them had close connection with emigrants in Paris. The

latter, on their part, were in contact with Jerome Napoleon, the 'Red Prince' as he was sometimes called." Through Prince Jerome the Polish Question must have produced some agitation in the mind of the Emperor Napoleon III, and it was precisely any association of the Emperor Napoleon with a Poland restored by his advocacy that Bismarck, as we see from his Memoirs, reckoned most dangerous for the aggrandizing designs of Prussianism. In this way we can connect the unsettled Polish problem with the war of 1870 and the new and more dangerous era that it opened for Europe. But neither Louis Napoleon nor any other ruler in France would have been able to intervene in favour of Poland if there had not been, deep down in the heart of the French people themselves, an ineradicable sympathy for the Polish cause. "Poor Poland!" says young Marie-Edmée in her diary of the year 1863. "I can speak of her no longer but she brings unrest to my soul. In heart I live in Poland just as much as I do in France, and I would give all that I have for the right to die there."

It is unnecessary further to multiply examples or to continue into later times. Enough has been quoted from the history of the nineteenth century to show the surpassing significance for a new and restful Europe of the settlement of the Polish problem. To some extent in recent years, as

was pointed out in the Prologue, the realization of this fact has been obscured for the people of Great Britain because of the extent to which non-intervention and the insular isolation of the country have obtained consideration in foreign affairs. But to-day it would be foolish to close our eyes to the conclusion that the last great attempt to lay down the boundaries of a new and peaceful Europe—the attempt at the Congress of Vienna—failed chiefly because it left the wounds of Poland raw and bleeding; and set loose a pallid and indignant spirit of nationality to be the future harbinger of unrest. The British ministers of 1815—Lord Liverpool, Vansittart, and the rest—looked upon Poland as merely a fomentor of discord. Lord Castlereagh, though he formally proclaimed the desire of his country to see Poland independent, did not also realize that a divided Poland would be of fateful augury for his country's future peace. All this is true of the settlement of 1815. What are we to say, in conclusion, of the situation to-day?

Poland is now in the occupation of the Central Powers, and there is evidence that neither Germany nor Austria has learnt anything from the events of the past. Not, at any rate, as to the indispensability of an undivided Poland; for, according to information said to have been obtained from a competent authority in Vienna and published in the *Dziennik Poznanski* of the 29th

September, 1916, it has been agreed that the Central Powers cannot assent to the union of Galicia and the kingdom of Poland. The latter is to constitute a separate independent State, its eastern frontiers depending entirely on the final results of the war; but Galicia is to continue as before an Austrian province.¹ What fatal blindness! It is to be hoped that the diplomatists of the Allies have passed beyond the stage at which this or any similar arrangement would be deemed consistent with the future of Western civilization.

But there is more to follow. It appears, from evidence that has come to hand from several different sources, that two propositions have won the assent of the leading statesmen of Germany and Austria. The first is that in any solution of the Polish Question the Poles as such should have no voice. The second is that the settlement of the Polish Question concerns only the three partitioning Powers, Prussia, Austria, and Russia. So strongly is Germany of this opinion that in an official announcement in the *Deutsche Warschauerzeitung* of the 24th March, 1916, she endeavours to reconcile the Poles to these conclusions by suggesting that, on the testimony of the Western Powers themselves, the Poles had nothing tangible to expect from the sympathy of

¹ Since these words were written the truth of this forecast has been confirmed by an official German announcement.

the Western Powers. "The military newspaper *Alsace*," so runs the proclamation, "published in the French fortress of Belfort on the 9th of January, writes as follows: 'The Polish question is not a European question, but an internal question of Russia, which has been in possession of Poland for a hundred years. Could the French representatives at the Peace Congress say to their Russian colleagues, "We deny your right to decide the Polish question, although you have shed your blood freely for the country"? and if Russia will not agree to that, what can we say? Will not she use the same argument to deny to her Allies the right to decide the fate of the territories which they have conquered? What extraordinary conflicts and complications that would bring! We must all think about ourselves. We must improve our own administration before we think of improving that of Russia. The time of political Don Quixotes has long passed away, and in the December number of the *Nineteenth Century* Mr. Frederick Harrison writes as follows: "While the liberation of Belgium and Northern France is absolutely necessary, it would be absurd to rebuild the ancient kingdom of Poland. The only practical solution of the Polish question is a local autonomy under the care of Russia and guaranteed by the Allies."'"

"The time of political Don Quixotes has long

passed away." Surely this is a characteristic expression of the mind and temper of Prussianism. The statesmen of the Allied Powers will have ill interpreted their mission if they do not perceive that in the Polish problem, rightly understood and settled, they have the means of firmly securing the foundations of the new Europe. The protagonists of reaction will throw obstacles in their path. They will insist that it is simply a question of a new and improved partition. They will claim that such a partition is only the affair of those who are now in possession of the partitions of the past. Even the most superficial consideration of the history of the nineteenth century will show how dangerous such a conclusion would be. For good or for evil the cause of Poland has become identified with the cause of a new and renovated Europe, and a Poland divided ever so skilfully by the hands of her former spoilers would still remain "a soul wandering in search of a body in which to begin life over again."

Poland, it has again and again been asserted, is the embodiment for the West of the persistent and irrepressible spirit of nationality. She became familiar with the mind of democracy so far back as the sixteenth century, and in storm and sunshine, in victory and defeat, in freedom and in repression, her people in all corners of the world have retained the will to live as an

independent State and to weave their own national individuality into their own institutions and laws. This desire for independence, in the view of the overwhelming majority of Poles, is the "alpha and the omega" of the Polish problem.¹ No one who under-estimates its importance can be said to understand what the demand for Polish nationality inevitably involves. All who appreciate it have come, in some measure, to comprehend the cause of Poland. It is for the statesmen of the Allies to ponder deeply, and to ponder deeply ere the drums have ceased to beat, on the history of the settlement of 1815, and to see that the new settlement, when it does come, shall be free of the most glaring crimes and errors of the settlement of the past.

¹ It is necessary to emphasize this point, in view of the assertions of Professor Pares and others—assertions which are not borne out by the most cursory survey of Polish opinion—that a reunited Poland only is needed to satisfy the Poles.

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